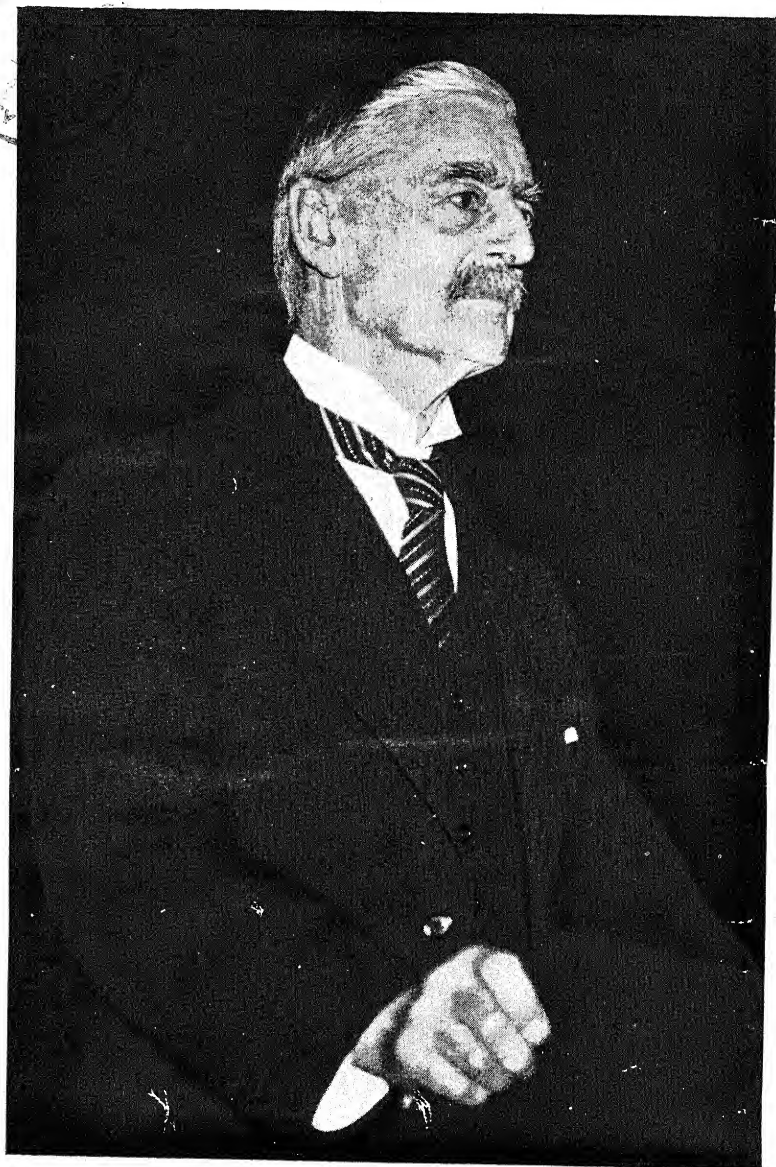
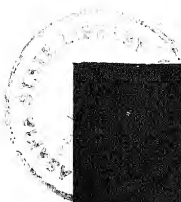


RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN



MR NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

"I trust I may live to see the da"

RIGHT
HONOURABLE
GENTLEMEN

by
WATCHMAN



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INTRODUCTION

WHAT qualities do we require in an ideal politician? A few years ago I had a discussion on this question with a Czech Anglophile who thought that nothing was too good for our public life. His theme lent him eloquence, and this is the picture that he drew.

The character of a Member of Parliament should be so upright that the faintest breath of scandalous suspicion perishes at once through its absurdity. He should have the courage of Cromwell so that he is never silent through the discretion bred of fear; whenever he has to make a decision he will shun expediency and ask only, "Is this right?" His skin should be thick enough to resist the countless mean things that will be said and written about him; but he should be sufficiently sensitive to recognize fair criticism and, like John Bright, to heed the cry of genuine distress. He should possess a deeply-founded knowledge of all the main political issues and expert knowledge of at least one or two. His culture, like Haldane's, should ensure that his interests are catholic. Like Arthur James Balfour, his mind should be open to new ideas, free from any confusion of prejudice with principle. He should be so intelligent that he should be able to meet the best informed on terms of ease, if not of equality. He should be so eloquent that he can speak spontaneously for an hour, and his

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audiences should long for more when he sits down. His silences should be as eloquent as his speeches. He should be the reverse of a bore or a prig. He should be so witty that he can illuminate the most laborious subject and the most pompous occasion with appropriate flashes of humour. He should be equally at home with mineworker and millionaire. Like Gladstone, his physical health should be so sound that it easily endures the strain to which his unflagging industry subjects it. He should be the diligent and accessible friend of his constituents, but should never forget that the Nation must come before the parish. His ambition should far outstrip his own advancement; it should embrace the welfare of all mankind. He should be a fair and formidable fighter, a modest winner, and a good loser. He need not be handsome; possibly a homely face will be worth more than the most exquisite theatrical exterior. But he should look a man.

Where could such a paragon be found? Nowhere, as far as I know, either at Westminster or within the body of any political party. Democracy, in her moments of reflection, is not sorry. She derides the cult of the superman and is fond of many of the foibles of her representatives. But she is right when she demands that her institutions shall be maintained by men of high ability and character.

The pages that follow are intended to perform for the reader two services. They are written for his entertainment, and they may help him both to understand the character and to apprehend the characteristics of some of the more prominent personages in our public life. If in this book the number of figures from

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the "Left" seems comparatively small the reader must draw his own conclusions. I cannot be expected to believe that their paucity is due to any prejudice of the writer.

All politicians cannot possess every virtue, but many are endowed with several. This book may be of some little use when the English observer is seeking to allot praise and blame. As for my Czech romantic, he is now the quarry of the Gestapo. But now we have the chance to further his deliverance.

To the reader it will be abundantly clear that most of this book was written before the end of Peace. Indeed it is only the chapter on the Prime Minister which was written after the beginning of the War. After re-reading the rest of the book in such light as is left to us I have decided to let most of it stand; for it may be found to have some prophetic qualities.

Every one of the characters mentioned here is as resolute as the writer for the victory of tolerance over tyranny. The fact that this book can be published in London at such a moment seems to me some slight augury of our success. We shall not, I hope, even in the darkest days that may lie before us, forget that nobody, however eminent, was ever injured by the friendly iconoclasm which reveals him as a human being, and that even in time of war democratic statesmen are as human as they were before the temporary exile of peace.

If the reader is irritated by some of the criticisms he is asked to read will he try to recapture the happier frame of mind of August and July?

September, 1939



I

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THIS chapter on the Prime Minister who committed Great Britain to the enterprise of leading the British Commonwealth of Nations into the battle against the most evil of all tyrannies must be set in the forefront of this book, though it was written last. It is the only part all of which has been written when it has become clear that millions of men and women in Europe may have their normal occupations broken by the wail of the sirens presaging death, fire and mutilation from the skies. Such, it might be said, is not an easy moment to write objectively. Yet I think that gratitude and compassion ultimately dominate my feelings as I now approach the character of one of the most famous figures in the world, the man who made inevitable the downfall of Nazidom.

I feel gratitude because he brought himself to declare war. Though that action may mean that I, as well as millions of others, may not live to see triumphing the cause which this nation will not allow to fail, I thank Mr. Chamberlain for recognizing that there are fouler evils than war. Without freedom and the assurance of honourable dealings in the affairs of nations we are better dead. Vindicate those principles, even at the cost of many lives of happy performance

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or glowing promise, and life again is fit to be lived by adult men and women.

The compassion I feel is no insolent emotion of presumptuous patronage. Intensely he desired "Peace for our time," but when it could only have been bought at the cost of the last shred of British honour, he did not shrink from the dark path of duty. Critics to-morrow will point to certain of his actions and say "This or that was a cardinal mistake. After that particular point either war with Germany or surrender to her demands became for Britain the inevitable dilemma," and so on. They may contend that Hitler, after meeting Chamberlain, was disastrously convinced that Britain would never stand in his path till he was so powerful that he could blackmail her to his heart's content. They may be right or they may be wrong. But these and kindred comments are to-day irrelevant. What matters is that at the end Chamberlain has sounded the doom of Nazidom. No other way is now open to us save this great and dangerous crusade. Chamberlain has led us into it: for that we are grateful and compassionate.

Why is sorrowful sympathy appropriate? You will understand if you read these words spoken in the House of Commons almost in a whisper by a man pale with toil and grief. A few minutes before the "Raiders Passed" signal had sounded after our first air raid alarm. The time was noon of Sunday, 3rd September:

"This is a sad day for all of us, and to none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, has crashed into ruins. There is only one thing left for me to do;

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that is, to devote what strength and powers I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have to sacrifice so much. I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play myself; I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established."

So spoke Neville Chamberlain, and never had he spoken less like a party leader and more like a representative of the British people. These words, the end of his speech to the House of Commons announcing the German failure to reply to our ultimatum, followed, at an interval of just over sixteen hours, a speech which had left the House and the public in a state of bewilderment. It now appears that the Prime Minister had had to keep as close touch as possible with our French allies. They needed a few more hours. He had to temporize. Late that Saturday night members of the Cabinet struggled to No. 10 Downing Street through darkened streets swept by rain and wind, illuminated now and then by flashes of lightning and echoing with the crackles of ominous thunder. They took their decision to dispatch an ultimatum on Sunday morning. Whatever our French allies might do, Britain was pledged, and the House of Commons showed on Saturday evening that Britain's pledge to aid Poland must be honoured without further delay.

Go back yet another twenty-four hours and the real Chamberlain can be heard again—a man bitterly disappointed at the failure of his efforts to restrain Hitler, overburdened by a heavy and mounting weight of toil and nauseated by the savage duplicities of the Nazis. Thus had he spoken in the House on Friday, 1st September:

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"It now only remains for us to set our teeth and to enter upon this struggle, which we ourselves earnestly endeavoured to avoid, with determination to see it through to the end. We shall enter it with a clear conscience, with the support of the Dominions and the British Empire, and the moral approval of the greater part of the world. We have no quarrel with the German people, except that they allow themselves to be governed by a Nazi Government. As long as that Government exists and pursues the methods it has so persistently followed during the last two years there will be no peace in Europe. We shall merely pass from one crisis to another, and see one country after another attacked by methods which have now become familiar to us in their sickening technique. We are resolved that these methods must come to an end. If out of the struggle we again establish in the world the rules of good faith and the renunciation of force, why, then even the sacrifices that will be entailed upon us will find their fullest justification."

To-morrow the historian may be arguing that, after his successes at Munich and Prague, Hitler always believed that Chamberlain would recoil from throwing the weight of Britain into the scales on the side of freedom. But if he reads the correspondence which, from 22nd August to 31st August, 1939, passed between the British and German Governments he will have to concede that over Poland Chamberlain cannot be reproached with the faintest shadow of obscurity. If Hitler was capable of being convinced he should have known that Britain was coming into the war he had planned and against Germany.

I write of Neville Chamberlain as a man as well

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as a statesman. After Munich he said that he and his colleagues would carry with them to the end of their days the marks of what they had endured. And he was right. During the last two years age has begun to challenge his fibre. Yet still he is a man whose whole body suggests the resistive qualities of iron. His prevailing colour is iron-grey. Till very recent years his head was covered with jet and orderly hair. It is as plentiful as ever but time has touched him. He is grey at the temples and above the forehead, so that in the distance he might appear to have a chaplet fitted on his brow. His eyebrows and moustache are also streaked with white. Yet his physique gives the lie to his age. Crises and long hours may sometimes wither his face with fatigue, but, after a rest, and when the demons of disturbance are keeping down their heads, he carries about his thin frame as briskly as a man in the middle fifties. In March, just after such appeasement as Munich had induced had been finally dissipated by Hitler's sudden absorption of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain completed seventy years of life. He is justly proud of his youthfulness. Like some other young men, he has shown himself able to learn.

When you are within a yard of him you will revise your first impression. The thinness of body is just as marked as at a greater distance but the face must belong to someone who has been through the fires of great anxiety. Political friends lament the certainty that he cannot lead them for very much longer. Lloyd George was a mere fifty-nine when he was deposed. Ramsay MacDonald retired at sixty-eight. Baldwin stepped into the shadows when he was just

short of seventy. It is no use to point to Gladstone. Chamberlain may possess some of Gladstone's inner fires to impel him forward, but the burden of supreme responsibility is to-day too heavy for any man to sustain for very long after he has reached three score years and ten. The war has upset all electoral calculations. Friends and foes who assumed that circumstances would allow of a General Election before November 1940 could treat it as virtually certain that he would not last as Prime Minister beyond the middle of the life of the next Parliament. I presume to offer no verdict upon his work, and these words are not intended to bear more than their face value: no man has undergone a more fearful strain; he deserves a rest. May his physique be as enduring as it seems, so that he may long enjoy it.

But let us return to the tributaries which flow into his character. To some he has seemed a strangely municipal figure. The late Lord Birkenhead is credited with a characteristic pronouncement upon him. "He would make a good Town Clerk of Birmingham in a bleak year." Except when he is enjoying the relaxation of fishing he wears the wing collar which is now seldom worn in daylight except by members of the legal profession. He seems fashioned to endure the rigours of winter as well as to enjoy the exuberance of summer. Beyond a doubt he is a big man. Some of his admirers have called him "great." If that is so, there is one quality which more than any other elevates him to that level. It is his moral courage. On some men it confers weakness as well as strength and has been known to breed obstinacy and self-satisfaction. In Chamberlain the quality is there in

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full measure wrought into the iron of his constitution. In the vulgar language of a facetious young critic, "I'm bound to say the old boy's got guts."

During the last half-century three Chamberlains have been in the forefront of British public life. Of all the three Neville seemed in his early years least likely to rise to be the head of a government. But for Home Rule Joseph might have succeeded Gladstone. But for the issue of Protection he might have displaced Balfour. At the age of seventy he was suddenly struck out of public life by ill health and lingered in the twilight for eight more years. On two occasions at least and perhaps on three, Austen seemed within an ace of the Conservative leadership. Scrupulous honour and studious self-effacement held him back. Yet here was a man who seemed as clearly marked out to be Prime Minister as anyone has ever been. At the age of forty he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Neville, who has reached an eminence above the high-water mark of either of the others, did not even enter Parliament till he was nearly fifty. This he did at the General Election of 1918.

But he had an earlier taste of administrative futility when he was suddenly appointed Director-General of National Service by Lloyd George as soon as he became Prime Minister at the end of 1916. The National Service Department was intended to form a pool of volunteer labour from which workers could be drafted into different parts of industry as and when they were needed. This ambitious plan only succeeded in causing friction and discontent. Neville Chamberlain, who had resigned the Lord Mayoralty of Birmingham to undertake the work, threw up the new office

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after seven months. This failure was not his fault. Nor was an earlier experience of frustration when his father had sent him to the West Indies for seven years to plant sisal. Owing to the unforeseen poorness of the soil the sisal plants rusted at the moment when they should have begun to be profitable. Joseph Chamberlain lost a fortune in the venture. But neither this private failure nor the public inefficacy of the National Service scheme was the fault of Neville. Any blame for the first was due to Joseph, for the second to the grandiose energies of Lloyd George.

His name was worth gold in the Conservative Party. He did little as the new Member for the Ladywood Division of Birmingham in the terrible Parliament that followed the 1918 election. But, when the Coalition split and Austen went into retirement with Lloyd George, Bonar Law—the new Prime Minister—made him in turn between October 1922 and May 1923 Postmaster-General, Paymaster-General and Minister of Health. Bonar Law retired to fade sadly away into the grave. Baldwin succeeded and raised Neville Chamberlain into the vacant office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. So after four years and a half of Parliamentary experience he was promoted to an office whose occupant is theoretically the Prime Minister's first lieutenant. But he preferred the chance to accomplish good work to the business of making himself famous. It is said that after the Conservative victory at the end of 1924 he went back without regret to the Ministry of Health while Winston Churchill became Chancellor. In this office he worked for over four years with unspectacular efficiency, concen-

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trating mainly on Housing and De-Rating. This second activity made no popular appeal; indeed the De-Rating Bill was as unexciting as its pilot then seemed to be. It did the Conservatives no greater electoral service than the inept slogan which the party managers selected for Stanley Baldwin, "Safety First." The officials in the Ministry of Health found him a good Minister to work for.

His name and his prestige were growing within the party. He began to seem the most probable successor to Stanley Baldwin. During 1930 and 1931 he was Chairman of the Conservative Party. He had always been wedded to the policy of tariffs and he now saw before him the opportunity of introducing his father's policy which the country had rejected a quarter of a century before. During the three short months of the emergency National Administration of 1931 he returned to the Ministry of Health. But he was not to stay there for long. His is said to have been one of the most insistent voices in favour of an early General Election. He was hardly the man to hold the baby long enough to see how its features might develop. Events might soon deform its early and innocent appearance.

After the election the Conservative Party in the House of Commons started a vehement clamour for Protection—even before MacDonald had determined the personnel of his Government. Who would become Chancellor of the Exchequer in succession to the suddenly translated Viscount Snowden? Would it be Runciman, or Chamberlain, or even Winston Churchill? The first and third might be doubtful quantities. Both had strong Free Trade antecedents.

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In the event Runciman became President of the Board of Trade and Churchill became nothing. The Tory hosts were somewhat mollified and reassured by seeing the key office go to Neville Chamberlain.

In his own sphere Chamberlain now became an autocrat. He managed the country's finances for nearly six years with great shrewdness. No one can say that, according to the standards he set himself, and within the limits of his office, his stewardship was anything but a success. Only right at the end did he seriously stumble over his first complicated scheme for the National Defence Contribution. It proved so distasteful to the Conservatives in 1937 that it had to be withdrawn and replaced by a simpler scheme for which his successor Simon took responsibility. It is commonly overlooked that the principle of National Defence Contribution survived the battery suffered by its initial shape.

After the ballot boxes had yielded up their secrets in October 1931, the foreigner was tempted to increase the flood of the dumping of cheap manufactured goods on to the British market to anticipate any permanent protective legislation that might follow. A measure bearing the dreadful title of "The Abnormal Importations Customs Duties Bills" was hustled through Parliament to prevent forestalling. By the early days of February 1932 Chamberlain had got his way. The dissentient Liberal Ministers headed by Samuel were allowed to stay in the Cabinet by the notorious and unprecedented "agreement to differ." And the cumbrously worded Act just mentioned was superseded by the Customs Duties Bill. Chamberlain's moment had come. In proposing the

tremendous reversal he said: "I do not think that any reasonable man would say that the delay has been unduly protracted. Barely three months have passed since the most remarkable election in the whole of our political history"—the late Mr. Morgan Jones interrupted loudly "And the most corrupt!" Chamberlain looked up in momentary surprise. He seemed startled, but not afraid. However he did not bother to retort upon his heckler and proceeded to state his case with exemplary clarity.

He summarized under seven heads the expectations which he and his colleagues entertained about the new policy. They are well worth reading in an abbreviated form. They hoped to correct the balance of payments, to raise fresh revenue in order to maintain the value of our currency and to prevent a rise in the cost of living, to bring to British industry and agriculture work then being done abroad, to make methods of production more efficient, to arm Britain with an instrument for bargaining, to promote Imperial Preference and so to strengthen the ties of Imperial unity. These results, all of them in greater or less measure, followed the inauguration of Protection. His critics might still theorize and fill the air with forebodings. Chamberlain was always able to point to results. He spoke for an hour and a quarter and, in the same toneless voice, ended with a finely fashioned tribute to his father. "His work was not in vain. Time and the misfortunes of the country have brought conviction to many who did not feel that they could agree with him then. I believe he would have found consolation for the bitterness of his disappointment if he could have seen that these proposals,

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which are the direct and legitimate descendants of his own conception, would be laid before the House of Commons which he loved, in the presence of one and by the lips of the other of the two immediate successors to his name and blood."

He sat down beside the President of the Board of Trade. Runciman of the inscrutable and imperturbable features actually smiled and administered to him two blows between the shoulder-blades. Sir Austen Chamberlain rose from the corner seat on the third bench below the gangway, took off his top hat, and proceeded to the Front Bench where he silently and solemnly shook his half-brother by the hand. This moment was a real, an abiding triumph. A far more violent demonstration of enthusiasm accompanied the end of his speech on Wednesday, 28th September, 1938, but on that occasion many Members could not have said whether they were cheering Chamberlain or Providence. On 4th February, 1932, the acclamation was exclusively for Neville Chamberlain—for nobody and nothing else.

Six budgets did he introduce. The unemployed had their full benefits restored to them and in course of time all the other cuts inflicted in 1931 were healed. Up to the moment of his introduction of the National Defence Contribution employment steadily rose to unprecedented levels. He hardly expected or measured his own success. When asked during the darkest period of unemployment for how long he expected the problem to remain acute he said with colourless candour "Ten years." This honest pessimism was so outspoken that the storm of taunts which it raised quickly died away.

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Before he became Prime Minister he showed that he would not be indifferent to Foreign Affairs. And during that preparatory period he took three positive steps—all of them associated with Italy. When he first grasped the full meaning of Italy's projected aggression against Ethiopia and the threat it might imply to British interests he is said in common with Lord Hailsham to have been most zealous for strong measures. After the election he understood the dilemma in which Hoare had been placed at the time of the Paris proposals. At first he and his colleagues in the Cabinet endorsed what Hoare had done, then, when the storm arose inside and outside Parliament, they repudiated him and he resigned. At the end of the debate on Hoare's resignation Chamberlain wound up for the Government. Early in his speech he said with a frankness which others might well emulate: "I say for myself that though I recognize to-day that that decision (i.e. to back the Laval-Hoare proposals) was a mistake, *I cannot say that in similar circumstances I should not again commit that mistake.*"

Again, in June 1936, Lord Cecil had made a speech urging the continuance and, if possible, the strengthening of sanctions. Mr. Chamberlain was the chief guest at the Dinner of the 1900 Club. He was there in the company of Lord Londonderry, Sir Robert Horne, Mr. Winston Churchill and some other shining lights of Conservatism. It was not a very important occasion and the company of men and women were expecting a fairly festive evening. Winston Churchill did what was expected of him. He made an amusing speech contrasting the outlook and habits of 1900 with those of 1936. But Neville Chamberlain surprised his

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audience and the country by uttering a retort to Lord Cecil. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, away from the House of Commons, delivered himself of a few observations on the international situation!

There is no evidence or likelihood that the matter had been discussed at a Cabinet. One can hardly imagine the shrewd Stanley Baldwin saying "Attack Anthony's policy at the dinner you are due to attend to-night!" After referring to Italy's patent and flagrant aggression Chamberlain declared that to continue sanctions when Italy had already won the campaign would be "the very midsummer of madness." Some of his audience were bewildered by this passage. Chamberlain's admirers will call this speech "very courageous." When Baldwin was questioned in the House he was as pale as a ghost and his face was convulsed with nervousness. Lloyd George had something to say about it. Just before the end of his "remarkable performance" on 18th June he said: "The Chancellor of the Exchequer is heir to the throne and has recently been trying the crown on to see if it fits. I hope for his own sake it does not. He has not merely tried the crown on. He has wielded the sceptre—which is just the sort of thing that heirs do when there are weak monarchs." Then came the final passage where Chamberlain was held up by Lloyd George as a self-condemned coward.¹

Though he may have accidentally invited this charge it was utterly false. Right or wrong he has always had the courage of his convictions. When he became Prime Minister after Mr. Baldwin had successfully seen the new King crowned that courage

¹ See pp. 68, 69.

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led him to take positive action. He boldly conceived himself as a man with a personal mission in one of the spheres for which he had not been trained—Foreign Affairs. It must not be inferred that there is any sort of ground for saying that a Prime Minister should submit slavishly to the Foreign Office and the Foreign Secretary. His word should be decisive, and he should certainly seek to equip himself with knowledge of the world as completely as possible.

When he became Prime Minister Mr. Chamberlain's diagnosis was probably simple and substantially correct. Germany was a danger but she could perhaps be made amenable to reason, especially the kind of reason which he would wield himself. Above all Italy must be detached from her side. Germany, if isolated, could not hope to win a war and might be expected to abstain from provoking one. In combination with Italy she would tend to be more aggressive and far more formidable. Chamberlain sent Mussolini a cordial letter and it is impossible to believe that Eden could have been a party to its dispatch. For a year Mussolini had been fomenting and fostering Franco's rebellion, action which imposed a severe strain on Anglo-Italian relations.

Eden, who had been the pupil, protégé and confidant of Austen Chamberlain, found himself in conflict with the Prime Minister's methods and principles; so he went in February 1938. From May 1937 to March 1939 men speculated on countless occasions "what Austen would have said" of the various changes that marked our foreign policy. To him, as to Churchill, Germany was the abiding danger. For nearly two years the policy of appeasement in fact

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strengthened Germany and enfeebled possible resistance to her. The death of Austen when Neville was within a few weeks of adding a Chamberlain to the scroll of Prime Ministers must have seemed to him a devilish tragedy. But, had Austen lived, would the austerity of his scruples have forced him to try to modify his brother's policy? Would he have felt bound to stand with Churchill, with Eden, with Cranborne and with Duff Cooper? Would his counsel have deflected our policy from the course it actually took? Or might not fraternal piety have prevailed and should we have seen Austen holding up his brother's hands in crisis and adversity as he had sometimes succoured Stanley Baldwin? We must not ignore the possibility that he would have found Neville's conduct of foreign affairs beyond serious reproach, though such approval would seem contrary to known conviction.

Eden was succeeded by Halifax, a man equally willing with Chamberlain to assign excellence of motive to difficult characters. This charity of outlook is admirable where purely personal relationships are concerned. Where the safety of the community and the law of nations are at stake it must have a limit. At some moment, to quote Lord Halifax, we must declare "Halt! Major road ahead." Chamberlain and Halifax began their task hopefully. They thought that Nazi ambitions were able to be sated before too much would be lost, and that a rational psychology would follow satiety. They tried to attribute to the Nazi hierarchy the same decent instincts which inspired themselves. Halifax had to learn from experience that Goebbels was made of different stuff

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from Gandhi. The chief Nazi personalities are not a body of devoted saints. Halifax and Chamberlain had a heart-breaking task as they tried to satisfy these cormorants and appease the implacable.

After the invasion of Bohemia, the Conservative Central Office, whose propaganda is excellent, recapitulated part of the tale of Hitler's fraudulent dealing. Some have regretted that this tune was not sung twelve months earlier. The periodic Conservative publication *Hints for Speakers* is a model of utilitarian propaganda, and it is available for anyone to purchase. The facts it selects are usually perfectly authentic and it sets an example to other parties whose methods are less tidy and more immoderate. When it was found necessary to remember Hitler's plentiful duplicities the Conservative literature set some of them out in telling array. The Conservative leader must have had in mind what Central Office had at its finger tips. Here were some of the means of testing Hitler's character—facts present in the minds of all with a shred of memory:

After Hitler's early triumph in the Saar in January 1935, apprehensions about possible German policy were lulled by a period of external quiet. With great cunning the German Chancellor let it be concluded that Europe could settle down to calm however brutal might be the persecutions he instituted against his enemies at home. On 7th March, 1936, Germany reoccupied the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland, which had been established under the Treaty of Locarno, a freely negotiated instrument whose obligations Hitler had reaffirmed. Simultaneously he

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declared that he had no more territorial demands to make in Europe.

In July 1936 Hitler recognized Austrian independence under a bilateral agreement between himself and Austria. In 1937 he stated that the period of surprises was over. On 11th March, 1938, while Dr. Schuschnigg was bending before the hurricane of German bullying, a German Army invaded Austria. Chamberlain, in a written statement which he read to the House of Commons, observed that this act of violence must have 'a damaging influence upon general confidence in Europe.' On the same day (11th March) Goering gave an assurance to the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin about the benevolent intentions of Germany towards Czechoslovakia and later expressly renewed the assurance on Hitler's behalf. On 12th March the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin was assured by Von Neurath that Germany considered herself bound by the German-Czechoslovak Convention for Arbitration of October 1925. These assurances were cited by Chamberlain in the House on 14th March. For some reason they are omitted from the catalogue of German treachery in the relevant number of *Hints for Speakers*.

In the course of his celebrated statement on "crisis Wednesday" Chamberlain told the House that at Berchtesgaden Hitler had repeated to him that the Sudetenland was the last of his territorial ambitions in Europe and that he had no wish to include in his realm people of other races than Germans. On 26th September in a speech in Berlin Hitler said "We do not want any Czechs." The Munich Agreement provided for the final determination of the frontiers

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of the new Czechoslovak State by the international commission. Germany occupied Bohemia on the Ides of March, 1939.

Two days followed during which some men entertained unnecessary doubts as to what would be Chamberlain's reactions. In his speech at Birmingham he showed himself convinced about the Nazi character and converted beyond recall from his former attitude of trustfulness. He had certainly given the Nazi leaders abundant rope. No doubt Chamberlain had supplemented his knowledge of Hitler's record by dipping into *Mein Kampf*. Then there were the widely expressed assurances of a fishy mediocrity, the Sudeten leader Konrad Henlein, given as late as the summer of 1938 and denying any desire for secession on the part of the Sudeten Germans. Chamberlain was in the dreadful position of having, till war became inevitable, to treat the Nazis in Germany as though they were as civilized as we are.

Let us trace the course of Chamberlain's efforts to find an honourable alternative to the catastrophe of war. The whole story is contained in just over a single year. It may be begun with a House of Commons occasion—the debate on the resignation of Eden and Cranborne which occupied two days of Parliamentary time. Though this was the most unpleasant crisis he had yet had to face, Chamberlain showed the quality of his stamina by delivering three speeches of first-rate importance in these two days. Only once did he show any unusual discomfort, when his hair began to leave its normally appointed setting.

In the first speech he contended that the peace of Europe must depend on Germany, Italy, France and

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ourselves and in the second, delivered at the end of the first day, he explained that he had omitted Russia because she was partly European and partly Asiatic. At the end of the second day he spoke in the vein both of the Prime Minister of Great Britain and of the leader of a political party well able to bring discomfiture to the Opposition. He is a first-class debater and he cannot always prevent a smile illuminating his lineaments as he sees his blows going home. He is able to make opponents afraid of him. He taunted the Opposition for their faith in "Collective Security" and then denied that the League as then constituted could afford protection to small weak nations. He publicly declared that, while at the last election he believed that the League might still afford Collective Security, he believed it no longer. In this context he called the Labour Party "the worst kind of diehards." It seemed as though Eden's departure meant to Chamberlain a welcome occasion for outspokenness.

Now what Chamberlain did after March 1939 may not have been solemnized before the high altar at Geneva. But every country on the West and East of Europe which entered the Peace Front and to whom Chamberlain gave a guarantee was a State Member of the League; and fifteen months' experience was enough to make Chamberlain spend a great deal of trouble, when trying to protect the independence of States against violent interference, in his efforts to attract the support of the "partly Asiatic" Russians.

Chamberlain's intellectual recreations are slightly old-fashioned but attractive and respectable. He reads Shakespeare for refreshment and enjoys hearing and playing Beethoven. No doubt he is fully familiar with

the witches' incantation in "Macbeth" and the unflagging motif that runs through the Fifth Symphony. From the moment of the submergence of Austria till our return under the compulsion of events to the principles of the Covenant the name that recurred again and again in our political anxieties with its burden of toil and trouble was "Czechoslovakia."

After the Austrian crisis it became necessary for Chamberlain to declare our policy about the future of Czechoslovakia. On 24th March, 1938, he spoke again. He began by casting a few darts at the Opposition and quoted the *Daily Herald* in support of his thesis that Collective Security under the League was no longer possible. Then followed an oft-quoted passage. He declined to guarantee Czechoslovakia. He showed he would have nothing at the moment to do with automatic obligations. He added these words: "If war broke out it would be unlikely to be confined to those who have assumed legal obligations. . . . This is especially true in the case of two countries like Great Britain and France . . . devoted to the same ideals of democratic liberty and determined to uphold them."

Now what exactly was in the mind of Chamberlain, Hoare, Simon and the rest at this moment? Perhaps they imagined that this warning, with its somewhat equivocal context, would be formidable enough to discourage Hitler's designs. They could not have been unaware of these designs, for how otherwise could Chamberlain have made this speech? Cabinets in England are really secret bodies. Only rarely does unauthorized but really authentic information leak out and that is such a rare occurrence that, if the leakage is serious, there is a public scandal. So we

may never know the debates and discussions that attended the composition of this speech. The majority, with Chamberlain's personality dominating the cabinet room, did not yet deem it desirable or necessary to declare to the Nazi caucus "Try it on and we fight!" Unfortunately it proved useless merely to point out that a certain course of action might lead to very regrettable consequences.

Most likely the same majority regarded with profound apprehension the possibility of having—as we know from Duff Cooper's speech of resignation they described it—"to fight for Czechoslovakia." One man at all events had no doubts about her strategic value; his name is Hitler. One thing at least he had learnt from Bismarck: "The master of Bohemia is the master of Europe."

Henlein and Hitler fomented a growing agitation against the government of Benes and Hodza. On the week-end of 21st May the first threat of war surged up and then was dispelled by the apparent resolution of many States to assist the threatened Republic. By July Chamberlain decided to send out his friend Lord Runciman of Doxford to act as mediator. Still there was no assumption of any responsibility for the integrity of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain and Runciman had a great deal in common. Both were men of a certain cultivation overlaid by wide commercial experience. To each the phrases of business are as natural as his mother tongue. Each of them in his personal relationships is a fair sample of Cardinal Newman's Educated Gentleman. But the men with whom they had to deal had different values and a different background.

By mid-September the situation was extremely perilous; in his own speech of the 28th, Chamberlain said he had not grasped its full gravity. So for the first time in his life he took to the air, flew to Munich and proceeded by land—thanks to Hitler's bad manners—as far as Berchtesgaden. At the Cabinet meeting which followed his return the principle of cession was agreed to although a few days before a *Times* leading article suggesting this "solution" had been expressly repudiated by the Foreign Office, and although Czechoslovakia, when robbed of her fortified areas, would be in danger of resembling, to quote the *Manchester Guardian*, "a hermit crab without its shell." In Britain a thunderstorm began to brew. The people seemed to have expected that Chamberlain had meant to let Hitler know the retribution that would follow persistence in threats. Instead some regarded the Berchtesgaden proposals as disposing of other people's property and so abetting piracy.

At Godesberg Hitler's duplicity was further revealed, for he raised his demands to an even more monstrous height and informed Chamberlain that he was surprised that he had returned to say that the principle of self-determination had been accepted. Chamberlain naturally came back dejected and unable to bring himself to act as anything more than the conduit pipe of Hitler's latest ultimatum to Czechoslovakia. Such indignation as had been felt in England against Chamberlain was now directed in a fiercer volume against Hitler. Parliament could no longer remain unsummoned. All was set for the intense scenes of 28th September.

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It is absurdly untrue to say, as ingenious gossips have repeated, that when, at five minutes to three, Chamberlain began his long statement, he knew the dramatic manner in which his speech would end. He may have imagined that a favourable communication might come through at some moment during the day. But it is a fantastic thing to say that Halifax and he had plotted that a message should be handed to Halifax in the Peers' Gallery at 4.15 and that it should then be hurriedly passed into Chamberlain's hands as he was speaking. Yet this ludicrous statement has been seriously made. Just before he ended at 4.22 Chamberlain announced that his personal message to Mussolini had resulted in the Duce's interceding with Hitler and persuading him to agree to postpone mobilization for twenty-four hours. He then conveyed Hitler's message inviting him to Munich on Thursday morning. "I need not say what my answer will be." The scene that followed has often been described. One Member on the Government benches yelled "Thank God for Neville!" "Neville" asked to be released and for the adjournment of the debate. Short speeches of good wishes were uttered by Attlee, Sinclair, Maxton and Lansbury. Mr. Gallacher, the Communist, was an exception amid the general thanksgiving. "I protest," he shouted, "against the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia." Some Members wept with relief and muttered their thanks to the Almighty. The House was up before 4.30.

This demonstration, I believe, had a tremendous effect upon Chamberlain. He saw around him the representatives of the British people standing up, waving their order papers, cheering a great reprieve.

He found himself bound to produce peace and produce it quickly. So as he was leaving next morning for Munich, he was heard to observe, "It will be all right this time." Right up to the publication of the terms of the Munich Agreement there were many Members of Parliament who were saying, "This is Hitler's first setback. He knows if he goes on he will meet with war and disaster. Chamberlain has at last shown him the face of resolution. We have been wrong in our apprehensions and criticisms. After all the old man has broken the Axis."

Alas for these rosy speculations! If the Munich "Settlement" was in some respects less terrible than the Godesberg ultimatum few persons knew enough about them to specify the differences, and in any case, if they existed, they did not survive very long. Faced now with a joint ultimatum by France, Britain, Germany and Italy—"I expect an answer by mid-day" was Chamberlain's bidding—the Czechoslovak Republic bowed down to the earth under a cruel weight of sorrow. The British Prime Minister flew back home. Benes retired into the darkness. At Heston Chamberlain held up the declaration made jointly by himself and Hitler. It was a typed document, signed in an illegible scrawl by the German Chancellor above the admirably clear calligraphy of the British Prime Minister. In the left hand bottom corner Neville Chamberlain had added the date. The characters of the two men stare out from the paper in their contrasted handwriting—Hitler mean, untutored, paranoiac, Chamberlain punctilious, lucid, resolute, honourable.

When he had enjoyed the congratulations of his

Sovereign in Buckingham Palace and a quasi-royal progress home to Downing Street he had to come on to the balcony of No. 10 and "say a few words." Here was a man thrust through accident and circumstance into the position of a national hero by a section of the populace which neither knew what was happening nor what it would mean for them. He was psychologically if not physically fatigued. He, who had never attracted the limelight, had been fantastically fêted. This is part of what he was heard to say. "My good friends, this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour . . . I believe it is peace for our time . . . I recommend you to go home and sleep quietly in your beds." Neville Chamberlain was thus indebted to Disraeli, to the Anglican liturgy, and to the late Lord Fisher. Films were made cobbling together every episode in his missions. For this exhibition one cinema proprietor expected a great, though perhaps a transitory, popularity; for he had set up outside his hall of entertainment a poster bearing the device: "Chamberlain the Peacemaker; for one week only."

Historians will insist on judging Chamberlain by his foreign policy, and biographers are no doubt already preparing to swoop like vultures directly he retires. The chapter of "appeasement" is ended. Munich will be treated as the central and most critical moment of his policy. It was acclaimed at the moment of its conclusion and was still applauded even after the event of the Ides of March showed the world the baseness of Hitler's character. Let some of the pros and cons be set out.

Pro: Czechoslovakia, however excellent a Republic she may have been, was not worth fighting for. Con: Was she less worthy of our help than Poland?

Pro: Czechoslovakia was in fact intolerant of her minorities. Con: Germans were always in the Czechoslovak Government. Compared with other European minorities the Germans in the Sudetenland enjoyed a privileged position. Munich has led to the temporary suppression of 8,000,000 Czechs. Till the desire to appease Germany began to permeate *The Times* and other London papers Czechoslovakia had always been held up as a model Republic. The alleged wrongs of the Sudeten Germans were an excuse and an excuse that was as mean as it was flimsy.

Pro: We could not have helped Czechoslovakia for she was inaccessible. Con: When you are defending a victim against an assailant your best tactics may well be to attack the aggressor in the rear. Sea-blockade, the air, the engaging of a great German force to hold the Siegfried zone—all these and other possibilities must have been present in Hitler's mind when he drew back on the 28th September. We alone were not the sole restraints upon German action. There were France and Russia besides. And was Poland or Rumania any more accessible to British aid in March 1939 when we extended our guarantee without any certainty of Russian assistance?

Pro: Czechoslovakia would have been crushed. Con: It is by no means likely that the German armies would have speedily overrun one of the strongest lines of fortresses ever constructed. The Czechoslovak Army was for its size better equipped and armed than the German Army. It had at least 1,000,000

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men. Germany could not have concentrated all her forces on this one frontier. The Czechoslovak Government expected, unaided, to be able to endure for six months.

Pro: Czechoslovakia was saved by Chamberlain's action. Con: The event proved the contrary.

Pro: The people of Britain would never have sanctioned an automatic guarantee of Czechoslovakia's integrity. Con: If he made this statement Chamberlain underrated his own influence. Did his guarantee to Poland and the rest arouse a storm of protest? Democracy will respond to guidance and leadership. A wholly united nation with its eyes wide open has followed him into a war which we undertook to fulfil our automatic guarantee to Poland.

Pro: The defences of Great Britain were not in a fit condition at the moment of Munich. Con: It is the business of all governments to see that their country always has adequate armed strength. And how long shall we need to make up for the loss of the heights of Bohemia and of the stout valour of the Czechoslovak Army—to say nothing of the mighty arsenal at Pilsen?

The controversy over Munich will never disappear. What matters most is that, whatever may have been right at Munich in September, Chamberlain has given us the chance to right the great and undeniable wrong the Czechs suffered in March.

Mr. Chamberlain may have intended putting the coping-stone on his edifice of appeasement by legalizing the entry of the Nazis into Africa. A shadow soon darkened the European garden when Hitler began his Jewish pogrom in November. "Does the

Prime Minister," he was asked in the House of Commons, amid deafening cheers, "think that Germany is fit for colonial possessions?"

When the whole Munich fabric collapsed in ruins in March Chamberlain looked shocked and surprised. I think his appearance was a sincere indication of the bitter disappointment that invaded him; he had genuinely believed that Hitler would keep his word. From that moment he was a gentler being. It is true that he laid about him with great force two days later at Birmingham when he had measured the public reaction. From now on he showed himself fully aware of the dangers threatening the British Commonwealth.

For months after Munich he seemed easily provoked by the normal processes of opposition. Once he began a reply to a supplementary question by the unfortunate statement "I am not here to be cross-examined about——" A shout went up, a shout with perhaps some justification about it, for is it not in order that he may be directly answerable to the public's representatives that the Prime Minister receives £200 a week? He saw his mistake, smiled, and righted himself. Poor Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, standing at the dispatch-box in the midst of some curvilinear sentence devoid of construction, sense and punctuation, seemed sometimes to be saying to himself as he paused, "By Jove, I'm Prime Minister! What a sight for tired eyes!" This conceit was laughable but harmless. Neville Chamberlain had not conceit but supreme self-confidence. What was in *his* mind might be, "I'm headmaster and, by heaven, I will be both master and head."

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He was able to assess the talents of his colleagues to all of whom he was undeniably superior. So he used to undertake all the major tasks of speaking himself, a habit which was not always appreciated by other Ministers. He has moreover always been able to appeal to the massive loyalty of the great majority of his supporters. "I may have my faults but this is not one of them." Cheering would cover up any deficiency.

One great advantage about his personality is that he enjoys the confidence of all the business community who have preferred short-range peace to present risks with the possibility of long-term security. They may have been as blind to the vast but inevitable risks associated with the enormous area to whose freedom Chamberlain was obliged to pledge our treasure and our blood as they were to the fatal consequences of allowing State after State to fall under Nazi dominion. But perhaps it is as well that they were too loyal to criticize when he had to do the one thing that might salvage freedom. Criticism of their hero used to be laughed away by the undemocratic plea, "He must know better than any of us." To-day that remark is not an empty one. Neville Chamberlain has learned, he is a man of stubborn determination, and if, during the time that remains to him, he presses on with the fighting of the war as loyally as he struggled to maintain peace, posterity will thank him for clearing Europe of the Terror.

Some have charged him with being a Fascist. It is a ludicrous charge, and can be tested by two criteria, one ridiculous, the other sublime. Freedom of opinion is as absolute with him as Prime Minister

as it has ever been. I may have implied criticism of some of the things that he has done. Yet no Gestapo will call on the publishers to threaten them with a concentration camp if they refuse to disclose my identity. And after months of grim self-restraint his real feelings on Nazi repression have shown themselves. His actions entitle him to the noblest motto: "Let life perish rather than liberty."

The quaint theory about Chamberlain's leaning towards dictatorship has perhaps been encouraged by the contrast he made with his two predecessors, Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay MacDonald, who alternated as Prime Minister for fourteen years before his own elevation. MacDonald was the despair of all who demand and admire clarity; when he was criticized he would allow himself to be wounded and would embark on the most elaborate essays of self-justification. He would fret and fulminate. Asquith, when making the speech which killed the first Labour Administration and incidentally preceded his electoral fall at Paisley, referred to MacDonald's "sacrosanct super-sensitiveness." Often the loudness of his voice alone gave MacDonald's supporters the signal for applause. At the same time he liked to make contacts with others who admired but could not aspire to his station. He had a certain charm of manner which often conciliated many whom his furious public obscurities had exasperated.

Baldwin seemed bent on giving the world the notion that he was an easy-going fallible human being. It was an astute and misleading impression. His premiership was not what it appeared to be—the apotheosis of the ordinary man. He had great depths

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of worldly wisdom which enabled him to select subordinates, disarm opposition and excite loyalty. No one has ever contrived more thoroughly or more naturally to sink to the level of his companions. He may have reduced the habit of playing for time to a fine art. But he was neither blind nor slow-witted. Beneath the plain and stolid exterior was a mind of superb subtlety and far discernment.

Neville Chamberlain's strength is different. No critic has ever called his statements obscure or his habits easy-going. He seems to hate all that is flowery, negligent, untidy or rhetorical. That may be one of the reasons which have made him a first-class broadcaster. Many prominent public figures have been failures at the microphone. They forget that they are neither addressing a public meeting nor coruscating in debate. Their task is to speak naturally and directly to one or two individuals sitting at their fireside with a wireless set in the corner of a private room. And Neville Chamberlain, by some happy accident, possesses the right technique as fully as anyone. At the microphone he does not lecture, he does not hector, he *talks*. Consequently he broadcasts better than he speaks or debates, though his dialectical powers are of a high order.

Often a first-class statement of policy in the House of Commons has fallen from his lips in tones which are so subdued as barely to reach the Press Gallery. From his speeches every fatty or superfluous word seems to have been ruthlessly sweated out. His case is clear to himself. He expects it to be clear to his audience. If they do not take it in or fail to agree he is impatient of their obtuseness. Once at a meeting

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he humorously exaggerated this characteristic: "I do not object to criticism provided I have my own way."

Before Britain steps into the sunlight of victory she may have to endure many days of disappointment, darkness and despair. Now and then the voice of pacifist defeatism may be heard. If some of our friends are at first overwhelmed we may be sure that here and there the plea will be audible "Why go on fighting? We can't protect our friends. Let us make a separate peace without further bloodshed."

To this sort of pleading we may be sure Neville Chamberlain, so long as he is Prime Minister, will be studiously and deliberately deaf. Nobody knows better than he what an abominable and treacherous thing we are fighting. He has touched and seen the enemy; he has felt the devil that possesses him. He has lived through the anxieties, hopes and disappointments of a long struggle to persuade Hitler to behave with a little human decency. The first part of his enterprise has failed, so the battle has had to be joined. No tolerable peace can come till Hitler's power is destroyed. Not from Chamberlain, we may be sure, will come any flinching or wavering in the grim labour of the overthrowing of those "evil things that we are fighting against—brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression, and persecution."

II

MR. LLOYD GEORGE

IN a year's time the Right Honourable David Lloyd George will have represented the constituency of Carnarvon Boroughs for an unbroken period of half a century. January 1940 brings him to seventy-seven. If he were a normal man his expectation of life would be limited to four or five years. But Lloyd George is not normal. If you look at him or listen to him speaking you will find nothing to suggest that he may not go on living and representing the same constituency for another twenty years. He is a being of prodigious vitality. He has no intention, as far as one can see, of acquiescing in old age.

Why should he? The outward evidences of decay are nil. There are one or two trifling symptoms of advancing years. When he is holding a bundle of notes they can be seen to quiver. His voice may sometimes be noticeably more shaky than the drama of the occasion demands. But these manifestations, so far from implying senility, serve to enhance the picturesqueness of an historic figure. He presents an appearance of reverend magnificence. Wherever he is the eyes of the company are focussed upon him. His hair is snowy and copious. Beneath is a face ruddy with health. He is dressed with care and neat-



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"Take Russia."

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ness. The cloth of his suits is what the tailors would call "distinctive" and "exclusive." His hands, the willing instruments of his rhetoric, are always immaculately tended. Face him and in repose you will see that the passage of time has subtracted something from the original firmness of feature. But watch him in profile and you will see the most defiantly resolute outline. The nose, the white moustache which a general might envy, above all the formidable and salient little jaw, tell you that here is a man who has never shrunk from climbing the difficult ascent to whatever objective he has conceived in secret. No one has realized more various designs. The secret of his achievement seems, so far as it allows analysis, to lie in charm, persuasion and ruthlessness.

Lloyd George is a living denial of the theory that manner counts for little. His speaking is incomparably effective and its effect is produced by excellence of manner and abundance of mannerism. It would not be possible to imagine a speech of Lloyd George that was free from gestures. Only a partial paralysis could compel him to deliver his speeches standing still with his hands in his pockets. When that infirmity befalls him he will have ceased to be Lloyd George.

It is now nearly seventeen years since he held executive power. When he speaks in the House of Commons to-day his most usual weapons are assault, cajolery and contempt. Few words are misused more frequently than "unique." Yet Lloyd George's style is wholly unique. It is often nearly sublime. As often an observer fears it may lapse precipitately into the ridiculous. If a man of less fame and meaner personality were to attempt it he would be ignored or

derided. Yet it is only rarely that Lloyd George fails to "get away" with it.

Consider the things about him that compel attention. First there is the plentiful and startling hair, so beautifully clean that it is a delight to look upon. Then there is the man himself, all he has been, all he has done, all he will mean to posterity. Lloyd George is a showman. He is fully aware of his tremendous assets as a spectacle and as a performer. So he begins his speech in tones so low that they hardly exceed a whisper, and although his voice is clear as a bell he is not easy to hear. But who among those lucky enough to hear him would readily miss a word? At once the magician has spread around him the kind of silence which is most commonly felt within a church when a great sermon or a fervent prayer is in progress. In the initial stages the only interruptions will be occasional petulant but friendly and not disrespectful cries of "Speak up!"

Lloyd George will comply. He is warming up. He is raising his voice. Right from the beginning his hands have been running their errands and sending their messages. At first he has stood at the Opposition dispatch-box with one hand on either side. He is making a concession to the argument of an adversary. So he puts his right elbow on the box and describes little arcs with his right hand, smoothly and so far without a hint of melodrama. He introduces a modification. The index finger is now the most lively member. He is presuming to impart a little instruction. He takes hold of his gold-rimmed double eyeglasses which dangle, suspended on a black tape in the best Harley-Street-cum-Bedford-Row mode, sets

them slightly askew on his nose and consults his notes with an air of severe wisdom. He verifies his transition, removes his glasses from their perch but keeps hold of them. They are part of the theatrical properties and become an auxiliary to his business. He admonishes a Minister and points the admonition by stabbing the air with his glasses. They serve their purpose, and are left to dangle as they are superseded by robuster theatre.

At this point in one of Lloyd George's performances, one who had watched him for many years with full measure of shrewd commentary enjoined a stranger in a whisper "Now watch his hands!" It was good advice to anyone who enjoys being bewitched. But most of the speaker's body also enters into the binding of the spell. Lloyd George is rejecting some plea or some individuals. Both his hands move across to the right and push aside the imaginary but undesirable suppliant. The movement suggests a pianist concentrating both hands on the right—and shriller—end of the keyboard. He is pressing home a point, so one clenched fist descends into an open palm, with great emphasis but without any noise to disturb his eloquence. He is speaking of the growing armies of the dictators marching—to what terrible destination? Their number, their rhythmical advance, are conveyed by his forearms stretched before him, his palms downwards, while his hands and fingers move upwards again and again. Lloyd George wishes to bring home the full force of some deliberate aggression. The fists are clenched while hands and arms move in great sweeps upwards and across his sturdy body. He wishes to indicate a threat to British interests.

He points downward to represent an arrow aimed at the heart of the Indian Empire. He pours contempt on the occupants of the Treasury Bench; so out go his arms as he embraces the whole company opposite in the most generous derision.

Many other preachers have resorted to gesture. But few can have attained such perfection of style, such elegance of flourish. Some inadequate cricketers try to compensate for missing the ball by brandishing their bats whenever they face the bowling. This beating of the air seldom deceives a sound critic. But Lloyd George does not seem to waste his energy. He is not prone to miss a long hop or a full pitch. He knows that before he can persuade he must attract, and these exhibitions are undeniably compelling. Only rarely does this kind of oratory command the attention of the House of Commons. It succeeds with Lloyd George because in its way it is perfect. If it were not for the uncharitable purport of much of his language he might always be the preacher and the world—his hearers—the flock. "He is a hundred-per-cent Welshman," said a proud compatriot. Yes, and if he were apparelled in the appropriate cloth he would be a hundred-per-cent Minister of Welsh Nonconformity. Sometimes his voice is nearly a growl or a scream; he seems to be on the edge of claptrap. But he keeps above the brink by some amazingly clever twist of phrase. Observe the following passage. Stripped of its embroidery it meant that we needed Russia to tilt the balance on this side of the Peace Front against the Rome-Berlin axis:

"Our 150,000,000 are not as ably and resolutely led (as the Axis populations), and the reason to a very

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large extent is that we do not quite know where we are. All this business about Russia is proof of that. We do not quite know what we want. There is a great desire, if possible, to do without Russia." So far there is nothing very memorable about the words themselves. The whole effect has been achieved by the most cunning distribution of emphasis. But now comes the phrase that we are going to remember, that will help to make the authorities seem slow-witted and absurd. "For months," proceeds the father of Ecclesiastes, "we have been staring this powerful gift horse in the mouth." By great good fortune Lloyd George is interrupted. A Conservative says "And seen its false teeth!" In an instant the speaker has turned the joke to his own advantage. He goes on laughing at his own fancy. "We are frightened of its teeth. That means that you cannot make up your mind; but the other people can. After all, you are not frightened of the teeth of those beasts of prey who have been tearing down one independent country after another. You are not afraid of *them*." He raises his voice almost to the level of a howl. "We have pacts of friendship with them. We have been shaking their paws." All is laughter now; all are enjoying the comedy. "At this very hour we are officially joining in the celebration of their carnivorous triumphs." This last sentence has suffered by the laughter which was called forth by Mussolini's "paws." So Lloyd George repeats it with infinite relish, and continues, "We do not quite know where we are." The passage that follows the gift horse has every mark of being extemporary. There is nothing very distinguished about it. There is brilliance in a

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phrase or two. But the manner of its delivery is a work of genius.

So you need not be too reluctant to believe what is written about him. One device of journalism is ruthless exaggeration. The adjectives "great" and "brilliant" are scattered through the eulogistic paragraph. But for once the journalist can safely let himself go. "Welsh Wizard" has a familiar ring. But the phrase need not be brushed aside with a smile of intellectual snobbery. Welsh he certainly is and who in the world is more like one's notion of a wizard? What should a wizard be? Someone, we may agree, who can employ magic and is possessed of second sight. If there is magic in obliging the reluctant to listen and the recalcitrant to obey Lloyd George has it in abundance. And his second sight is a sixth sense. He knows what is going on in the heads of his companions or his audience. All the loyalties and prejudices within their minds are visible to him as though their skulls were made of glass.

The company he now sets himself to move consists to a great extent of landowners and ex-officers of the fighting services. After the financial crisis of 1931 he was convalescent for some time, but when he came back to the House he concentrated largely upon Agriculture. He had, if not a willing, at least an inevitable audience. The condition of agriculture has long been unhealthy even for that chronically neurotic industry. So Lloyd George knew he would be heeded. Would not those who own the land like it to be more profitable? Lately Foreign Affairs have become so fashionable that no showman could ignore them. Their strategic bearings have become more and

more significant. And who, more than Lloyd George, should be qualified to speak on the dangers of wars and the winning of them? There he stands, an old man with no infirmities of mind or body, but with the authority of historic experience. It is not safe to ridicule or interrupt him. One rather unworthy trick of those who dread the mischief he may do them is to organize laughter against him. He once made one of his slips in his indictment. An elderly opponent said to his neighbours, "Come on, let's laugh at him!" No doubt Lloyd George heard, for he brought his guns round to bear on the knot of childish and disorderly Members. He has only to scold "This is no laughing matter" (when he really means "I will not be a laughing stock"), or "I have had great experience of these vital questions" (i.e. "I was once Prime Minister when you and your friends were sheltering behind my leadership"), to bring out the cheers which deprecate further interruptions.

So, while he is not doting, he leans heavily on anecdotage. His war services always supply a trump card. He may have paid the munition workers at rates that were ruinously generous. His methods of winning support from Labour and Capital may have been unconventional. But he got the guns. He produced the shells. He kept his head and warmed the heart of a sorely tried people. When he was Prime Minister we did not suffer starvation in 1917, though the perverse conservatism of some of his colleagues and subordinates brought us perilously near to it. All these achievements are never very far from the memory of those who hate him most bitterly and suspect him most cordially. Then there is the sobering

reflection that several among the most powerful section of his critics owe their early advancement to his nomination or to his approval. It was Lloyd George who gave Mr. Neville Chamberlain his first experience of national, as distinct from municipal, responsibility.

He adds the dialectical trick of developing his argument from the premises of those who are least likely to agree with him. Indeed he often seems, during the delicate and piano overture, to be feeling for the melody which will be most acceptable to his audience. So crafty do his inveterate critics regard him that they tell this romance. At a critical moment of his Premiership Lloyd George was addressing a meeting whose sympathies were in doubt. He had two sets of notes prepared—A and B. They were the foundations of two wholly different discourses. He felt about for a few minutes on the basis of A. A particular point produced an unexpected reaction. So he discarded A and proceeded to deliver B! The enthusiastic result fully repaid his strategic alternatives. The writer has heard this story three times from the lips of one otherwise very intelligent lady. If you think what this story implies you will share with him his doubts of its credibility. There are limits to the irresponsibility of Prime Ministers. On the other hand, if you keep your critical faculties alert, you will see this technique being vigorously operated during the exercise of the art at which Lloyd George pre-eminently excels—the art of conversation. Superb rhetorician he may be, but I am inclined to set a higher price on his reputed powers as a conversationalist.

With an audience of six or seven, preferably containing one or two quite young men—or women—he is incomparable. All his potent faculties have their best chance. When you hear him debating you can from the Gallery of the House of Commons feel his magnetism at work on your sight, your ears, your brain. The tug is very nearly physical. But when he is conversing the charm of his good fellowship warms the hearts of his companions. Their defences are soon in ruins. He can concentrate his forces on one or two willing victims. There is nothing of the complexity caused by numbers or distance. But just as he senses the larger audience, so within the narrow circle he feels his way with unfaltering steps.

Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones soon learns, or thinks he learns, that the most remarkable public figure of the twentieth century has been waiting for years to make his memorable acquaintance. He finds, or thinks he finds, that even *he* can make a valuable contribution to the sum total knowledge of the young man with the white head. As a matter of fact he can. For Lloyd George no personal contact, even with a veritable numbskull, is completely wasted. He is adding to his store of democratic experience. Even a courtier of a feather's weight may offer some tiny fragment of information or emotion to help the king of the demagogues to shape his next appeal. And the sour wisecracks turn knowingly to one another and say, "Lloyd George has a terrible habit of picking the brains of young men!"—as censoriously as though they are speaking not of others' brains but of Lloyd George's teeth.

See Lloyd George the centre of a circle and you

will know he is enjoying himself. Gesture, engaging and not superfluous, animates his hands and his arms. And he has won his audience, not by lecturing, but by the most agreeable companionship. He is asked a question, let us say about the state of our arms. With natural politeness he parries it with another, his lively response suggesting that he values what he has been asked. "The first thing to decide is who are you going to arm against?" Now, till very recently one of several rejoinders would have been, perhaps not rational, but at least possible. But whether the answer was "Italy" or "Germany" or "Russia" or even "France," Lloyd George would be ready with his reply. Even supposing it is quite contrary to his own predictions he will not, as some others with comparable prestige are tempted to do, annihilate the other. He will say "Very well!" and then, with timely pleas for the assistance of the company, he will deploy his own ideas of how we should meet the hypothetical adversary.

Nor will he hesitate to discuss other individuals. He will dissect another's character and abilities with far more kindness than when he is speaking publicly. Again Mr. Smith's opinion is invited. Whether the consequent expressions are penetrating, or gauche, or artless, or artificial the Welshman will detect the reality that lies behind them, and will encourage Mr. Smith to reveal his best conversational form. Is not this gift above rubies? How blithely Mr. Smith will observe to his relatives or his constituents, "I was only talking to Lloyd George on Thursday and he told me . . ." or better still, "I told Lloyd George all about Chamberlain. He seemed quite impressed

by what I said." Few men are so strong as to be completely proof against this sort of flattery. But it goes further. He displays a real interest in the fortunes of the obscure. If he is listening to a speech he will laugh beatifically at the most laborious jokes at his own expense, or applaud a sympathetic sentiment with a deep-toned "Hear, hear!" or turn to face the speaker with respectful attention. He knows he can be seen, even by an embarrassed orator, and that his slightest movement counts. Or he is said to greet Mr. Smith with a youthful buoyancy. "Are you going to speak to-day? Did you catch the Speaker's eye? How did your speech go off?" Whatever the answer, elated, depressed or indifferent, he will be ready with just the right word of encouragement.

Some eminent men are charming to strangers and intolerable in the family circle. Lloyd George is always ready to radiate great waves of charm, which he seems to manufacture and store in his supremely happy home. That is the one citadel which all the efforts of his detractors cannot destroy, for whatever else he may be he is a most successful father. His relationship with his four children is as perfect as such a thing can be.

Gwilym and Megan have been in the House for a joint total of twenty-two years. Being Liberals they could hardly expect office, though for a brief period during the first National Government of 1931 Major Gwilym was Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade. Both have inherited their father's charm. Both, as politicians go, are curiously natural. In no other respect do they resemble each other or their father. Major Lloyd George is a large man with a strong physique always ready to talk on

any subject which his companions want to discuss but with far less malice towards others than is common among men. If X maligns Y some amiable being is likely to see that Y receives a report. There are few men or women whom Gwilym Lloyd George ever wants to disparage in respect of their appearance, their character or their behaviour. He has mountains of common sense within his bulky frame. While the father is like a shooting star the son suggests a lighthouse—the old-fashioned type that casts its beams somewhat wastefully over a limited area. So he has no enemies. Indeed he is a hot favourite for the Speakership when next that immensely dignified office falls vacant. It is a little difficult to imagine either him or his delightful wife retreating into that celestial detachment. But the House of Commons values his humanity and trusts his fairness. If this forecast proves correct Gwilym's character will reap a great reward. He will have reached a position of cardinal consequence without the initial advantage of belonging to a numerous party. He will have become by title what his father has long been in fact, the first commoner of the realm. And the name of LLOYD GEORGE will be emblazoned in gold in the Silence Room of the House of Commons Library. Future generations of half-instructed pilgrims will ask "How came it that the famous orator and Prime Minister held the one office in the Commons which precludes its holder from ever making a speech?"

He would seem an authentically English Speaker. For both he and Miss Megan Lloyd George seem as English as Beachy Head and Chanctonbury Ring, though both their parents are as Welsh as Aberystwyth.

But they are Welsh in a moment directly they fall into their mother tongue. This they use with unaffected proficiency to each other or in greeting some other compatriot. Miss Megan was bound to be a famous woman. Her father took her into a kind of political partnership in her childhood. In the turbulent days before the War when in Conservative eyes he was the arch-villain of a piratical Government he said of her with fond rhetoric, "Whatever my opponents do to me here is my garrison." And Megan no doubt beamed up at him like a happy elf.

She can still look up to him. Stocky though he is, his daughter is still shorter. The size of Gwilym is biologically unaccountable. His sister has a quicker wit and a more acid tongue. A story was current that when as a child she was canvassing in Carnarvon Boroughs she put to an elector the customary leading question, "You'll vote for my father, won't you?" He answered, "Yes, indeed I will, but you must give me a kiss first." "Oh dear, no!" piped Megan, "that would be bribery and corruption." Her voice has a rare quality. Its tones ring out clearly and concisely. While many women in public life bellow, whine or mewl, Miss Lloyd George does none of these things. Her beautiful neat voice is too rarely lifted in public; when she speaks or broadcasts her words sound almost in the brusque manner common among women of the governing classes. But she is the reverse of a snob. Like her father she can enjoy laughing at herself. In his house she lives. Small wonder if she prefers such blessed singularity to matrimony with someone who might be solemn or stupid or selfish.

These then are two more priceless personal assets

RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN

self-righteous, straining at gnats after they had swallowed huge camels, but professing a working faith in the Resurrection." He was in the middle of saying "There sit the Sadducees"—meaning the Simonites on the Treasury Bench—and "There are the Pharisees"—indicating Sir Herbert and his supporters—when Samuel interrupted him: "There were also the Essenes who retired to the wilderness." This interruption was admirable, for it could fit Sir Herbert himself or Lloyd George. Lloyd George was momentarily nonplussed and could only think of observing, "Yes, a very good retort."

Perhaps Lloyd George was disturbed by what Sir Herbert's "synthetic humour" had done to him. Samuel had already spoken in this same debate and had adroitly spirited away from the mill the wind that would set its sails whirling most merrily. This passage of Sir Herbert's deserves, I think, to rank as high as any of Lloyd George's most frolicsome fooling. "My right honourable friend is himself a keen and successful farmer, engaged largely, I believe, in the production of fatted calves which do not always find consumers. He is also, as we all know, a master of the sharp and flashing sword, which he seldom allows to rust with disuse. He has attacked everyone in turn and often three or four together. He has attacked the Conservatives and the Socialists and the National Liberal Federation and the City of London and Germany and France and the League of Nations and the Lord President of the Council (Baldwin), the Foreign Secretary (Simon) and my honourable friends and myself. Soon there will be no one left to attack unless Lloyd attacks George and George attacks Lloyd."

And did they hear his speech on the resignation of Anthony Eden? Just before that crisis the Government had lost to Labour the constituency of Ipswich. The successful candidate had turned over about 10,000 votes. Lloyd George charged Mr. Chamberlain with failing to let Eden, the Foreign Secretary, know of a document from Italy. His charges fell flat. His peroration was an indictment of the Government's failures. He enumerated what seemed to him the worst—"Beaten in Manchuria, beaten in Abyssinia, beaten in Spain." One of the Labour Party who perpetually distrusts Lloyd George and dislikes his oratory ejaculated "Beaten in Ipswich!" It made a poor climax to a speech intended to flay the Government.

His most telling and brilliant effort of recent times was his speech on the raising of sanctions. A passage from it is quoted elsewhere in the chapter on Sir John Simon. The skill and invective of his earlier years are all there in full measure. Mr. Baldwin, who was compelled to speak next by the ecstatic shouts of an Opposition drunk with the wine of Lloyd George's frenzy, described it half ironically as "a very remarkable performance." Let it be read in Hansard for the 18th June, 1936. The reflection asserts itself that if Lloyd George were twenty years younger and lacked his historic associations he would make the ideal Radical leader whom the Opposition so pitiably lack. A middle-aged Mr. Lloyd George untrammelled by nearly fourscore years or by the ubiquitous enmities of lesser men, yet arrayed with the same flashing panoply, would have had the National Government out of office on a dozen different occasions.

Eden had opened the debate under a heavy load

of disappointment and sorrow. He had to announce that pressure upon Italy was to be ended. Not unnaturally, with the memories of the General Election seven months before fresh in their minds—when the Government had declared their devotion to the League and to the restraint of aggression—Members of the Opposition cried “Sabotage!” and “Resign!” Mr. Arthur Greenwood followed for the Labour Opposition. When he had done Lloyd George announced that it was his duty to say “one word.” The “one word” took an hour for its utterance, but with Lloyd George excelling himself the minutes flew away on wings of magic. With most Parliamentary speeches sixty minutes is at least double the proper and tolerable length. But any who may have succeeded in objectively watching the fashioning of this work of art sighed with sorrow when the great display was ended. He observed, with undeniable accuracy, that he was one of those primarily responsible for committing Great Britain to the obligations of the Covenant. At once he had the House listening, not only to Lloyd George, but also to the sense that he was stating. Without sanctions the authority of the League must perish, the law collapse and anarchy supervene. None of the nations had failed to “stand by sanctions.” Eden was going to Geneva to break their ranks and to smash the League of Nations. “I wish he had left it to somebody else” (with immense apparent earnestness); “honestly I do.” Eden, who had been hailed everywhere as the champion of the League, should resign.

Then came another sly pointer to his own prestige. “I have been in this House very nearly half a century,

and I cannot recall an occasion just like this. . . . May God never repeat it for the Empire." Sanctions had cost us a trade loss of £7,000,000—only two-thirds of what the Empire paid in a single day in the last war. The danger of war was less than when sanctions were started. Now came one of Lloyd George's most damaging blows at a Government sustained by a host of Tories. At that time it was being said that our Navy was unprepared "under this patriotic Government!" The cheers of the Opposition were mingled with injured protests from Government supporters, some of whom called out "Unfair!" Mark Antony might have said "This was the most unkindest cut of all." Lloyd George went on. Not only was the Navy now re-equipped but in France the reluctant Laval administration had been superseded by Blum. Spain too had changed her government and was much more favourable. (Would Franco have rebelled if Italy had been defeated?) Germany was at that moment no menace; France was not going to fight over the re-occupation of the Rhineland.

Even Lloyd George's greatest speeches usually include the dropping of at least one brick. It came at this point and was of a goodly size. He asked whether anxiety about Austria was the reason why the Government had changed their minds. He went on, "There is one thing the people of this country have made up their minds definitely about. Whatever Government is in power they will never go to war again for an Austrian quarrel." This sentence, we take leave to say, is the most astonishing nonsense. Lloyd George may have always been favourable to the Anschluss, but was that any justification for

playing the newsboy for Lord Beaverbrook? Did the war of 1914 spring solely from an "Austrian quarrel"? Would the collective resistance to Italy which he would have liked to see have been nothing more than an "Abyssinian quarrel"? Some partisans of the National Government call his assaults on their sacred edifice "mischievous," though what else they can expect from him it is hard to guess. But if ever there was a remark bristling with mischief it was this parenthesis of Lloyd George upon Austria. Could he really not see that he was lifting the "All clear" signal to future aggressions? What encouragements may he not thus have given to Mussolini in Spain and Albania, to Hitler over the Sudetenland, Bohemia, Memel and Danzig? If we assume that the people accept the Polish guarantee, would armed resistance to any aggression Hitler may commit against Poland be merely "going to war for a Polish quarrel"? Sometimes Lloyd George seems dazzled by his own headlights. No other explanation is possible of this deviation from the high road of sanity.

He went on. Sanctions were being raised because it was said that, with the fall of Addis Ababa, Abyssinia was conquered. But that did not necessarily mean the defeat of Abyssinia. "Let us not forget our experiences in the Boer War." A laugh arose as Members recalled his pro-Boer energies including an escape from Birmingham Town Hall in the disguise of a policeman—surely a pocket policeman. With complete good humour Lloyd George laughed back, "I am not likely to forget mine!" In an instant he had established a base of good will for his next attack. After the capture of Pretoria, he reminded us, we had

to double our forces. What was going to be our attitude towards the men who were still in possession of two-thirds of Abyssinia? Were the British Government going to impose an embargo on the passage of any arms to them? Then followed the quotation from the Government's manifesto¹ and his transfixing of Simon by the mere quality of his derision—a performance completely hidden by the cold printed words of Hansard. He now levelled his revolver at Baldwin, who had just published a volume of speeches under the emotional title *This Torch of Freedom*. "There is a very remarkable picture of the Prime Minister on the cover, with the torch of freedom illuminating his countenance." He cited from it affirmations of strength, stability, courage, resolution, firmness and certainty. "The Government had not been in for more than a few weeks before that torch was dimmed. To-night it is quenched—with a hiss." . . . "The Government have led. How? They go forward, then they go backward; they go sometimes to the left and sometimes to the right——" With unhappy rashness a Conservative back-bencher interrupted "Rather like the old Coalition." Sir Austen Chamberlain, a devoted colleague of Lloyd George's in those days of oscillation, added his wan smile to the general laughter. But Lloyd George turned on his interuptor, "Let me tell the honourable Gentleman that that coalition brought us right through to victory. . . . We had many faults and many defects, but cowardice was not one of them!"

He resumed the path he had marked out. "The Government led. . . . We led in the imposition of

¹ See p. 96.

sanctions; we led also in the denunciation of the aggressor. We led, too, in proposing, I think, oil sanctions in principle; and we also led in selling oil in practice." Here were two more mistakes, this time two errors of fact. Oil sanctions had been proposed by Canada. The percentage of oil imported by Italy from British territories was a comparatively trifling proportion of her total intake. But he continued by travestying our leadership from the Election through the Laval-Hoare proposals up to the climax of abdication. "And now they are running away, brandishing their swords—still leading!" He told the story of the soldier who was asked what he was doing twenty or thirty miles from the battle, and replied, "The Colonel asked us to strike for home and country and I struck for home. . . . The Government has struck for home."

The preliminary bombardment had been discharged, the heavy artillery had battered down the defences. All was now ready for the final assault. The moment had come for the peroration. "I began my politics when you had very great names—Disraeli, Gladstone, Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain. There was a name that had only just passed away—he had not passed away when I was born—Lord Palmerston. You might agree with their policies or not, but no one doubted that they were men of dauntless courage!" He referred to the outspoken and audacious declaration just made by Neville Chamberlain to the 1900 Club advocating the raising of sanctions, and then referred to a speech of the same minister at the General Election. Chamberlain had said it would mean a cowardly surrender if we broke all the pro-

mises we had made and that we should hold ourselves up to the shame of our children and our children's children. The man under whose Premiership hundreds of thousands of young men had fallen in battle paused and regarded the Government Bench. "To-night," he said, "we have had the cowardly surrender." He comprehended them all as his clenched fists swept outwards and upwards in contemptuous semi-circles. "And there sit the cowards." He sat down.

If in the House you openly call someone a coward you will almost certainly be called to order. In this speech you can see the skill with which Lloyd George implied the charge again and again and finally made it directly, but in such a way that it would have been too late to stop him. In any event the objects of his abuse might well be said to have asked for it through the mouth of one of the most important of their number. You expect superb scurrility from the inventor of an entirely new technique of controversy. It is natural that from his lips should fall not literature but Limehouse. In this respect he has not allowed himself to be handicapped by any ladylike inhibitions. His platform manners differ from his personal behaviour as loudly as the international conduct of statesmen is often to be contrasted with the uprightness of their private relationships. No one before him in a position of high official authority had made such a free use of invective as did he when he first joined a Government. But that is hardly surprising. Up till the end of 1916 when he became Prime Minister the dynamic little engine had been striking down obstacles and opponents, privilege and prejudice. All he has done has been the result of his own effort.

He was in the House for fifteen years before holding office. After being elected in 1890 he first opened his mouth at Westminster under the awe-inspiring gaze of Gladstone. Perhaps he had already a number of ambitions for himself and his fellow-citizens, but it must have put a severe strain on his self-confidence to foresee himself, a youth of twenty-seven—a provincial solicitor of six years' standing—stepping some day into the shoes of the great Liberal Prime Minister, bred at Eton and Oxford, a first-class scholar in classics and mathematics. But the momentum of the Welshman's impact on affairs certainly moved mountains of opposition. The renown of his eloquence began to grow. He discovered how to arrest the attention of his audiences. He may at first have been happiest when speaking in Welsh, but Welsh peculiarities are no longer prominent in his speaking. Only if you listen very attentively can you detect the extra hiss in the pronunciation of an "s". Unlike other Welshmen his voice does not run up hill and down dale; you do not feel you are listening to a plaintive representative of a subject people. When he chooses he can be eloquent at an Eisteddfod in the native tongue of the majority of the company. To please Welsh gatherings he can lapse into their language and play the revivalist. Is it membership of a national minority that gives him his sympathy with small nations and has always led him to champion the unfortunate?

He felt his reputation growing. His sympathies with the Boers did him no permanent injury. There were plenty of people who were not too proud of our part in the South African War. He joined the Liberal

leaders on the Front Opposition Bench, and, with their absolute triumph in 1906, came his accession to power. The period of waiting had irked him. He showed his truculent glee when, as President of the Board of Trade, he crushed an interruption by Balfour. "The right honourable Gentleman is not in command of the House now. We have been the victims for years and it is our turn now!"

From this moment till he left office nearly seventeen years later he could give full rein to the faculty which has underlain his success—a deadly determination to pursue an objective without scruple and without wavering. When he became Chancellor of the Exchequer he set up a wholly new structure of social services. Men new to politics have sometimes been surprised to hear their distressed constituents asserting that they have been deprived of their "Lloyd George". They are referring to the insurance benefits for which Lloyd George enjoys the main credit. Thus has he immortalized himself among the afflicted. Associated with these reforms was an ambitious but abortive scheme for the taxation of land values, while the constitutional battle raged round the powers of the House of Lords. Here was the ideal conjuncture for Lloyd George's most profuse outpourings of vitriol. Read his Limehouse philippics, or, as he would say, "Take Limehouse." The landed gentry were left without a stitch on their backs. Yet somehow they have managed to survive. Many new dynasties were started at the end of the Great War when Lloyd George ennobled the middle classes on a handsome scale. "Oh, these Dukes," he said at Limehouse, "how they harass us!" He may have stopped short at the

distribution of Dukedoms but during his premiership plenty of public servants became Viscounts, Barons, Baronets and Knights. His methods may have been without precedent; but he did not lose the war, he did not leave the old age of his fellow-citizens stricken and unconsolated, he did not fail to alleviate pauperism.

He would like best to be hailed by the historian as a pioneer of social reform. The inexorable behest of circumstance has enshrined him as the Victor of Versailles. He allowed himself against his instincts to be pushed by Englishmen of shorter view into assenting to a French peace. He seems to regard the Peace Treaties as triumphs for France and for the demon of vengeance against his own judgment. As soon as he was turned out of office by the Conservative Party who had forced his hand at Versailles he began to declare himself openly against France and to back the claims of Germany. For years he ignored the German menace. He met Hitler and conversed with him, while the Nazis quoted from his speeches in their propaganda. He has never been blind about Mussolini, who to him is the arch-breaker of treaties. It is only within recent years that he seems to have appreciated the true character of the German Government. Indeed any sense of wrong he felt for what he did to vanquished Germany has darkened his judgment to his country's discomfiture. But, though he has now measured the true menace of Hitler as an arch-brigand, his hostility to dictators is mingled with an oft-stated respect for their shrewdness and purposeful resolution. They, like him, know where they want to go. He does not seem to have much spiritual love for democracy as a form of government for its own sake.

In his eyes it havers, wobbles and is over-fond of leadership by mediocrities.

He has set out in his book his version of the War. He was never meant for literature and his writing has not enhanced his reputation. The events are not made to march; there is not that minimum of respect for chronological order that keeps the reader's attention fixed on their progressive evolution. He has his striking phrases but they are lost in the general disarray.

As a party leader his power has steadily declined. The last time the Liberal Party showed signs of resurrection was at the General Election of 1923, when he consented to fight with Asquith as his leader. Baldwin reconciled them by asking for a protectionist mandate. For less than a year one hundred and sixty Liberals kept in office a minority Labour Government. Asquith was chiefly responsible for turning them out. But at the end of 1924 the electorate only remembered that the Liberals had brought them in and so they sent the Liberals back with 40 seats instead of 159. Asquith himself was defeated, so Lloyd George was again the leader of the sad little rump. In 1929 he made a terrific electoral effort. The Liberals arranged to fight every conceivable kind of seat. Although the tide was flowing against the Government the public preferred the Socialists to Lloyd George and his Liberals. The result of vast expenditure was a net Liberal gain of nineteen seats. When the results were being flashed on to a screen from a building high above Trafalgar Square an illuminated figure of Lloyd George from the opposite side kept winking out its electoral slogan "We can conquer unemploy-

ment." In the surging crowd two little unemployed men in their ragged clothes were asked whether they were not pleased that Labour was clearly winning a new authority. "We wanted Lloyd George to win," they said. Two was not many in that vast mob of excitable people: this couple made a sorrowful symbol of the nadir of Liberalism.

But once again it was the Liberals—fifty-nine of them with Lloyd George to lead—who held the balance of power. By their leave the Labour Government stayed in office for over two miserable years. Lloyd George had great unofficial power. The Labour Party could often hardly move without consulting him. Illness struck him down at the financial crisis of 1931 and in any case the public were more interested in the conduct of MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas than in his objections to a General Election. In a broadcast he warned them that a National majority would mean the imposition of Protection. But that seemed to be just what the public wanted.

By 1935 he was the main personality in a body called the Council of Action. This movement enjoyed a Nonconformist inspiration. Each Parliamentary candidate was presented with a questionnaire on domestic and foreign policy and asked to commit himself to vote with the group in the new Parliament. The results were what might have been expected—in most cases support was given to anti-National Government candidates. Those National aspirants who satisfied the Council of Action suffered considerable embarrassments. Lloyd George was not designated "leader," but how could the public treat him as anything else in a body of this kind with which his

name was linked? So candidates had to answer a question more searching than any in the Council's questionnaire, "Do you support Baldwin, or Attlee, or Lloyd George?"

Some time before this uncommon activity there had been a considerable movement to bring Lloyd George into office. It came to nothing, but five years later in these doubtful days in 1939, when men are talking of coalitions to prevent or win this present war, his name is still mentioned as one who should hold some position in the Government, possibly Lord President of the Council, Lord Privy Seal, or Minister without Portfolio. So placed he could lend the whole of his wisdom and experience to the country. Assuredly few single acts could more greatly impress intending aggressors with the will and capacity of Great Britain to resist their designs and resist them successfully. It would be like bringing part of our glorious past to life again.

What a tribute then can be exacted by the man's sheer force! We are almost compelled to speculate whether at seventy-seven in the worst of crises he might not approach indispensability. Can he, we are bound to wonder, bewitch everyone into writing a eulogy of himself? Are men flattered out of their senses by being treated on terms of confidential equality while he generously exhorts them to "take Russia," to "take Agriculture," or to "take tanks"? Is there really any substance in the warning reported to have been given by an elder statesman to a new Member, "Lloyd George is the devil incarnate. Never let him get his hand on your shoulder." I do not think these cautions and precautions are necessary. Truth to tell it is not

easy to wish him twenty years younger and Prime Minister once again. There is about him a streak of harshness, a too primitive delight in smashing his opponents' stupid faces. There is besides much that is overwhelming and irresistible. Two years ago he delivered a beautiful obituary speech on Sir Austen Chamberlain. That side of Lloyd George is surely as real as his wielding of the knout. If only he would in public more often turn his natural tenderness towards the world! Charity is well esteemed within the Baptist Communion to which he adheres. But his work for the British Empire and for mankind at large may not yet be over. Other men have held important office at an advanced age, and Mr. Gladstone was Prime Minister at the age of eighty-three. "Ah!" you say, "there was only one William Ewart Gladstone." "No doubt," we can easily retort, "and there is only one David Lloyd George."

III

SIR JOHN SIMON

THIS lawyer, though hardly the most popular of statesmen, possesses an intellect like a sword. At the moment of writing he is no less a personage than Chancellor of the Exchequer and deputy-leader of the House of Commons. He owes those important positions not to the many qualities in his character so much as to powers of advocacy which have made him an almost indispensable asset to the National Government. There are few characters so dark that he cannot find something to redeem them. There are few mistakes so gross that he cannot vest them with some slight attributes of wisdom. These exercises inspire admiration for his subtlety and grateful applause from a party anxiously searching for a dialectical exit from dense thickets. But do they kindle personal affection or deep respect? They do not.

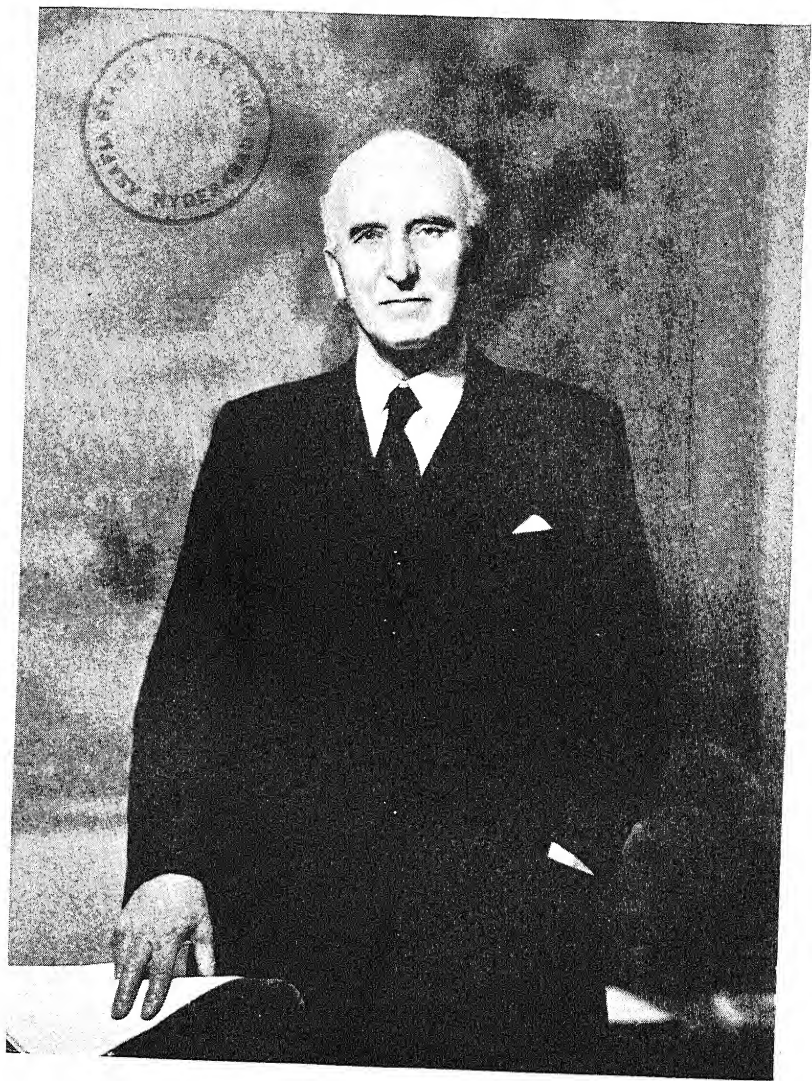
Approach the person of Sir John Simon. There is a fashion to murmur malevolently about him. So the incredible tale is told that he radiates physical coldness. You must sail as boldly as you can up to the edges of the iceberg. There, so the figment continues, you will spend a few very chilly moments until you can proceed into warmer waters. Your problem of escape may be solved by the incalculable motions of

the berg itself. It may suddenly sweep away before the impulse of some powerful and unpredictable eddy. You will be left floating and gasping till a more genial atmosphere succeeds.

But let us try to think of Simon as a man.

They say that he will probably look past you as he shakes hands. In that there may be little that is unjust. Have you his mind, his memory, his distinction? The chances are at least a million to one against you. But it is not an attractive greeting. Nor will you find it easy to carry on a light and amiable conversation. It will quickly develop into a monologue. With great condescension Sir John will begin imparting information. If you venture to answer or attempt to make a positive contribution to the common gaiety beware of inaccuracies. You will be speedily put wise. Anything like a discussion will be quietly scotched. Simon is deadly in argument and cannot resist one. He will annihilate any interchange by starting a disquisition. You may think you are progressing well although the gaze of the great one is straying over a picture or down the page of a book. He can listen and read at the same moment. Every weakness in your thought or language is being noted for the correction that is never long delayed. However slow your intelligence you will soon be made to see how wrong you were or how incomplete your dialectical defences. Thus does Simon seek to enliven the dullest company.

He may be surprised at the disappointing social consequences but he does not vary his manner. Has anyone dared to go to him and tell him with his own simplicity and directness that people do not enjoy



SIR JOHN SIMON

being proved wrong or intellectually inferior? It is commonly said that he yearns for friendship and friendliness. There is no proof of this report except that in most men these are natural aspirations. Nor is there in his behaviour any evidence that he really wants to be liked. I do not believe that he is capable of being so stupid as not to know that he goes the wrong way to win any kind of personal following. Most men—above all most politicians—enjoy an audience of the great. They like to be consulted, not squashed. He must know it. So the theory that his sudden assumptions of good fellowship are due to a pathetic desire for the warmth of friendship is not wholly credible. The prayer to Providence that he may be made “a good fellow” is a legend and not a very plausible legend. There is no evidence that he has any consciousness of imperfection. On the contrary, the notorious arm-linkings and accostings of the unknown by wrong Christian names are—in so far as they occur at all—occasional lapses into a democratic deportment for which essentially he has no use. That they are ever tried is embarrassing. That they are so rarely performed is proof that at heart he despises them. He is perfectly at home in the chilly element that surrounds him.

A few years ago Simon still looked a young man. Now he is ageing, but with great dignity. He is tallish and almost distinguished. His face is very nearly handsome. It is not quite a photograph of virtue. It just fails to be very attractive. With a few adjustments he could be a bishop, with a few more a banker. Around his bald dome cluster bosky tufts of woolly white hair. To-day he is venerable as well as

formidable. A few years ago he was merely terrifying. Now he mellows, ripens, and refuses to decay. He is still able to hop about like a man in his twenties. Age is treating his physique very kindly. His face is still that of an opponent who will give no quarter. A hard chin, approaching the dimensions of that of the actor, Mr. Leon Quartermaine, supports a mouth that seems fitted for sarcasm and denunciation. Above his red cheeks there rove a pair of dark brown eyes often reluctant, save when a crushing rhetorical question is uttered, to transfix a fellow human being.

In its way his manner of speaking in the House is unexceptionable. Thin but natural, his voice can be heard everywhere without effort by speaker or listener. He has quaint habits of tenderly massaging his back and of fiddling with the buttons of his waistcoat. Anon his large hand will stray towards his heart and then the House prepares itself to hear some most admirable sentiment. With a devastating logic he can destroy the most sincerely and most ardently presented arguments. And he does the job with an effortless simplicity and a superiority of manner that depress opponents and excite the admiration of those who search for excuses for doing nothing. Therefore it is hardly to be wondered at when his critics indignantly protest that he could with an equal facility make the opposite plea. Did not his annual emoluments at the Bar represent a normal rate of interest on a capital of one million pounds? But the source of these princely riches was advocacy and nothing more.

He is now responsible for raising unheard-of quan-

tities of revenue to defray the defence bill. Great armaments mean dangerous days. And these dangerous days have followed his three years and a half at the Foreign Office. *Post hoc propter hoc?* How lightly would Simon expose and riddle the fallacy! "Did I incite Japan to invade Manchuria? Did I inspire the Germans to cry 'Heil Hitler'? Did I inject the virus of aggression into the veins of Mussolini?" Loud laughter would punctuate each sally. But the historian, who is not interested in the opportune refutation of fictitious charges, will not, if he does his work properly, be so conveniently turned aside. For all these calamities, and above all for the failure of the Disarmament Conference, critics will try to saddle John Simon with the blame. The oft-cited delight of the Japanese delegate at Geneva with Simon's presentation of the Japanese case will not be readily forgotten; nor will the alleged lack of any policy to submit to the Disarmament Conference till Germany's temper boiled up into Hitlerism. Time oozed away while Simon remained at the helm. His tenure of the Foreign Office cannot be described as a success. When he was describing the lead we had given in disarmament "to the edge of risk"—a phrase which, as his own creation, he used to love to repeat—he specified as one of our disadvantages at Geneva our lack of weapons to offer for scrapping. Is this an argument or an excuse? While it may be difficult to answer it fails to convince. How like its author!

But he is still there, a model of oral efficiency and practical failure. His office is in theory second only to the Premiership in importance. But there is this curious truth, that normally a Chancellor of the

Exchequer, if he confines himself to raising revenue and balancing the budget, may do little harm. He is not nearly such a power for evil as a Foreign Secretary. Yet is it anything but the height of irony that, as Chancellor, he should be having to make us pay for the misfortunes which follow his years at the head of the Foreign Office? And, suppose the Premiership were suddenly to fall vacant, John Simon is the man who in theory should succeed. Make that suggestion to anyone moving within the inner circles of politics. He will not cheer or smile. He will meditate. But it would be unwise to say that this succession cannot come to pass. There might be tactical advantages in having a "Liberal National" to succeed two Conservatives and an ex-Socialist as the head of a National Government.

To what extent is our hero a Liberal? Lord Birkenhead described as "a foolish and malicious invention" the story that he and Simon tossed up as undergraduates to see which side each of them should take in politics. Even if it were an accurate story it need not be true. Undergraduates are attractive beings. They are at the height of physical and intellectual exuberance. They can take any cause or any book however serious or sacred and represent them as objects of ridicule. And they would cause little offence because they are too inexperienced to be denied the pleasure of irresponsible laughter. But they are not conspicuous for their stability. Even a John Simon might, in a companionable moment, have pretended to an F. E. Smith that his future was of no more account to him than the toss of a coin. But it is highly unlikely. Anyhow the legendary coin

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made the proper decision. Smith was bound to be an adventurous Unionist moulding his natural extravagance, generosity, egotism and intellect to the purposes of a dashing career. Simon equally could not escape at least starting as a Liberal, austere, cautious, conscience-ridden.

His public life may help to discover his convictions. His residence at Oxford coincided with that of Belloc, Smith and C. B. Fry. All of them went some distance to fulfil their early promise. Hilaire Belloc, to-day the least known, may be preserved to fame the longest of all. The mark made by fine literature is narrow but deep. Fry's brilliant banalities on the greatest of all games show that his Oxford contemporaries were right in their high appraisal of his wits. So long as Smith survived in his Lucullan and luxurious arrogance he and Simon, between whiles at issue, expressed mutual admiration. A faint glow of tenderness seems to inform Simon's anecdotal references to "F.E." That emotion may with some justification be mixed with pity. Simon has never been so foolish—or so human—as to give way to physical self-indulgence. His present health and stamina are the reward of studious self-discipline.

In his youth he could not have had many opportunities for fine living. He was most fortunately bred in the household of a nonconformist minister. An agreeable trait in Simon was his devotion to his mother, who lived to a great age. John (Allsobrook) went to Fettes before proceeding to Wadham. So slowly has his youth deserted him that there is hardly an effort needed to see an adolescent Simon pursuing a Rugby football in the tough society of Scottish

schoolboys. But if Fettes failed to toughen him it certainly did not injure his capacity for work.

At Oxford he became, as did Belloc and "F.E.," President of the Union. The Oxford Union is an assembly which demands and appreciates epigram. It is inclined to be impatient of mere argument. So Simon's distinction is real evidence of great excellence. They also made him a Fellow of All Souls, an honour denied to Birkenhead. No easy road to legal achievement lay before him. He assisted himself by winning the Barstow Law Scholarship and was called to the Bar in 1899. Simon has never written anything which people want to remember or preserve. But in his early days at the Bar he was not above helping to boil his pot with the proceeds of journalism. Wise young man!

Early in his life he had to endure a tragic end to great happiness. He married at the age of twenty-six, but lost his wife in three years. He was terribly wounded by this cruel stroke of fate. Perhaps this loss was an added stimulus to hard work; for how else can great grief be remedied? His first wife left him with three children. For eighteen years Simon remained single pursuing a career with superhuman application. He married again in 1917. He now enjoys so much private happiness that all his energies are available for public work.

Simon "got on." In 1906, a youth of thirty-two, he entered the House of Commons as Liberal Member for Walthamstow. Four years later he was Solicitor-General. In 1913, still only forty, he became the technical head of his profession by succeeding Sir Rufus Isaacs as Attorney-General. Simon was ele-

vated to the Cabinet and, before the War, was sharing directly in the supreme responsibility of Government. He was widely acclaimed as an unbending champion of Free Trade. Two more years passed during which Simon and his colleagues began the War against Germany. The first coalition was formed under Asquith. Simon did not step out or sideways. He advanced to be Home Secretary. In 1916 came turning-point number one. Asquith decided to introduce conscription. Simon's critics say that he believed the measure would prove an unpopular failure. His supporters say that Simon's conscience was touched on the raw. Compulsion of the individual on this issue was wholly objectionable to him. All that was liberal within him rebelled. Not being a time-server or a placeman he resigned.

Nobody can say what went on within that superlative brain. If he had expected a popular revulsion he made an immense miscalculation. I should prefer to attribute to Simon's move complete sincerity. It is the easiest explanation. It fits his earlier record. He could contend that compulsory military service was a denial of all for which the country was fighting, that no citizen of a free democracy had a right to impose this service on his fellows, and that what we should gain in numbers we should lose in good will. The event did not support this third plea. But no one could foresee that. These sentences were first written in mid-April, 1939. There was then a growing pressure on the Government to leave nothing to chance in any collision with Germany. The demand was heard that every Englishman should be a conscript. Indeed its strength became so great that the Govern-

ment seemed in a dilemma. They may have felt that to conscript our manhood would be to misdirect our energy. It was wondered how Simon would behave. Would the evil of 1916 when Britain was threatened with defeat become the stern necessity of 1939 when Britain was actually at peace? Fortunately Simon changed his opinion. He is still there.

So out of the Government went Simon and into the Air Force. If he learned to pilot a machine he no longer practises his art. Somehow Simon is not to be associated with aerial stunts. He managed to do some work at the Bar. One of his outstanding triumphs with a jury was achieved when he successfully defended Malcolm against a charge of murder. But he was now to suffer again. The War ended. To Simon's credit he followed Asquith and not Lloyd George in the infamous election of 1918. Few candidates who neither breathed fire and slaughter against the German ex-Emperor nor proposed that vast and unobtainable plunder should be squeezed from the vanquished stood any chance of survival. With Asquith Simon fought. With Asquith he fell. To suffer defeat at that election was a creditable thing. For Simon to have courted it, when he could have crept under Lloyd George's wing, was almost heroic. It is recorded—doubtless apocryphally—that before the War Simon was once detailed to wind up an important debate for the Government. He perambulated the lobbies describing his qualms. Of this kind of nerves Asquith was always supremely contemptuous. He observed to a companion "there is a disturbance in that which Simon is pleased to call his guts." Round about 1918 Sir John was certainly

showing a quality which many would identify with courage.

It asserted itself again a little later. Lloyd George met the Sinn Feiners with reprisals. The Black and Tans were allowed to behave with a violence which earned them the deepest disrepute. But for the time England was more concerned with the atrocities of the Irish Republicans. The burning of creameries seemed less savage than the assassination of unarmed officers. And so it was. But it was a stupid act to destroy a source of livelihood and retaliation did not end there. Simon mounted platforms and exposed the folly and futility of Lloyd George's policy while his audiences sometimes howled at him. These experiences could have been neither to his taste nor to his advantage. But events vindicated him fully.

He glided back into the House in 1922. Spennings Valley, an industrial division in the West Riding of Yorkshire, gave him an uneasy seat. During this post-War period lasting till November 1931 he is commonly understood to have acquired unprecedented and unparalleled emoluments at the Bar. But he presided over the Royal Commission on India, and that act of public service must have reduced his chances of gain. The dimensions of a man's earnings or winnings are not as a rule very interesting. But Simon was a prodigy. He was so busy that clients who had to pay unheard-of fees for consultations would boil with indignation at the scant attention he seemed to be giving them. He would stare at some point behind the expositor's head, or seem to concentrate on a document while the solicitor stuttered away in his haste to reach the point, or he would hustle the

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whole bunch out of his Chambers long before they felt they were satisfied. Then he would dictate a superb opinion or come into Court and mesmerize Judge, opponents, and hostile witnesses. When the Judge was delivering his judgment he would begin perusing another brief. And each pile of documents would probably be marked "Sir John Simon 1,000 guineas." His position at the Bar was singular. If the Judge seemed to exceed what Simon adjudged to be relevance he would utter an audible comment to a neighbouring King's Counsel. It was assumed that he might be unable to stay long in any one court. These must have been happy years for him as he proceeded from court to court fawned upon by the Bar and feared by the Bench.

In 1926 his advocacy proved of considerable value to the Conservative Government. In the House he reinforced the judgment of Mr. Justice Astbury, who found that the General Strike was illegal; that the action of the Trades Union Congress was not protected by the Trades Disputes Act of 1906. This finding was to many as surprising as Simon's interpretation. But there is no doubt that the effect of Simon's exploits was to shorten the strike. Respectable trade union officials did not fancy themselves as prodigal law-breakers. So they found their way to No. 10 Downing Street and to the benevolent presence of Mr. Baldwin, who "thanked God for their decision." Simon was very pleased with himself. He had a little book printed called *The General Strike*. It contains his speeches on this strange and dangerous interlude. It usefully includes as an Appendix the terms of the Trades Disputes Act. You can read therein what in

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1906 the term "Trade Dispute" was defined to embrace. And you can judge for yourself whether twenty years later John was right.

Such is part of the background to the fatal years 1931 to 1935. As the insolvent Labour Administration was staggering to its doom Simon associated more and more intimately with the Tories who were harrying its course. But he did not enjoy a scathless progress. The main element of controversy in Snowden's budget of April 1931 (not the later emergency budget) was the taxation of land values. On 3rd July, during the third reading of the Finance Bill, Simon contended that, although such taxation conformed with Liberal principles, the manner in which Snowden was applying it amounted to the early stages of confiscation. Simon was also known to be leaning to tariffs. When later in the throes of the financial crisis we left the gold standard, Simon found further reasons for a discriminating tariff. Lloyd George, supporting Snowden, was there that Friday noon to lead most of the Liberals into the Government lobby. As Simon seemed to be turning his back on Free Trade and other Liberal principles his fellow Welshman drew out his longest and knottiest scourge and lashed the apostate. Lloyd George left the Chamber for a few minutes and after an intensive preparation returned to castigate the unfortunate. Here are a few gems of invective:

"To all who have been strictly orthodox there is a satisfaction in seeing the mighty fallen, a sort of naughty satisfaction. It is like the case of the teetotaller who all his life has been so stern that he looked with lofty disdain on anyone who took a drop of alcohol—however diluted—to his lips, and suddenly, when he

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is approaching the seventh decade of his life, he takes to drink: you see him reeling from one side to the other, and he ends his career by entering an inebriates' home. . . ."

Lloyd George illustrated the drunkard's progress with all his resources of pantomime. But Simon was to be held up, not only as an intellectual sot, but as a hypocrite as well.

"I do object to this intolerant self-righteousness. . . . Greater men have changed their opinions in the past, but they have never taunted those who still adhered to the underlying principle with lack of principle, with being mere manoeuvrers and tacticians. They, at any rate, did not leave behind the slime of hypocrisy in passing from one side to another!"

Lloyd George, the crafty old Parliamentarian, kept just within the rules of order as he stung his victim's cheeks from pink to crimson. Seldom has the House seen so terrible a denunciation. But the executioner ended with an even more pitiless stroke. Simon had rashly called the bulk of the Liberals "his lamented friends." Lloyd George cried:

"May I give him, as a lamented friend, a word of warning. The Conservative party will hail with rapturous delight his criticisms upon his friends and his attacks upon the causes to which they adhere. They will applaud him. They will use him to the utmost—all his powers and all his gifts—and when he ceases to be useful to them, they will fling him aside—or they will treat him as they treated an infinitely greater man, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. They will fob him off with a second- or third-rate office, and cheat him of the prize which they dangled before him."

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Lloyd George's analysis may have cast in relief all Simon's worst weaknesses. But as a prophet Lloyd George was wrong. Within four months Simon had become Foreign Secretary. But his tormentor had been struck down by the necessity of undergoing a serious operation. So the first act of the new play was allowed to develop smoothly.

Simon was now to be submitted to a real test. How far would the Liberal within him prevail? He was placed in the most difficult of situations. Here was a man, three parts lawyer, one part politician, presented with an opportunity which comes once in a generation. A bold programme of general disarmament might have been accepted and have secured civilization. But Simon depended upon a majority in the House of Commons which identified great armaments with national security. The vicissitudes of politics had elevated him to an office of matchless distinction. Which way should he set his course? Should he steer for the goal of universal safety and jeopardize his great position, or should he keep his office by giving his followers a transitory satisfaction?

Only Simon's blindest adversaries would say that he alone was the parent of the progressive worsening of world relationships. But there is the fact. And no one could charge him with failure to please the hundreds of Conservatives to whom disarmament was the height of folly. For three years and a half he kept himself in favour, till the bankruptcy of his policy was too glaring to be concealed by the brilliance of his debating. When his speeches during his tenure of the Foreign Office are read the reader will marvel at their immaculate skill. The emphasis, the phrasing, the

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arrangement were all perfectly calculated to gratify those on whom he relied for support. Time and time again he would score a great triumph in the House of Commons and just as regularly the public would grow more and more apprehensive at the darkening of the sky. He turned corner after corner, but his path became stonier after each momentary respite.

Eventually the Conservatives themselves, by their private representations to the Whips and so to the Government, showed that, though they might have cheered themselves hoarse, they were not blind to the lack of results. They had Simon removed to the Home Office. But, like some enormous jury, they had been flattered and entertained for so long that it is surprising that they retained a glimmer of political vision. Simon is rebuking Sir Stafford Cripps, who has rashly committed himself to the remark that in disarmament Great Britain has "done nothing." Simon begins a crushing retort by the deliberate sentence, "The learned gentleman is too young"—pause, while the Government back benches rock with applause which Cripps must feel like a whip across his eyes. Simon goes on to compare our armed forces with those we had at the Armistice in 1918! He then observes that Cripps is exhibiting a classic instance of "fouling one's own nest." More tumultuous and vengeful applause. But to gain this effect Simon has had recourse to the dialectical device of confounding the Government with the Nation. Others have borrowed this expedient.

Once the impression Simon caused was so disastrous that the House of Commons witnessed from him an approach to a public apology. It was in the autumn

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of 1934, when the public had been suffering from an acute attack of conscience upon the private manufacture of armaments. Mr. Attlee had mentioned the white slave traffic. So when Simon spoke he said, "Let me ask the honourable gentleman: is it his view that State brothels are right but private brothels are wrong?" Several members of the little band of Socialists called out with irrational anger "Dirty!" but Simon had the better of the exchanges that followed his challenge. In a long speech of dialectical excellence he found time to attack the literature issued by the League of Nations Union and the Union of Democratic Control. In his peroration he included two somewhat irrelevant quotations. The first was Grey's remark on 3rd August, 1914, "The lights are going out all over Europe; they will never be lit again in my lifetime." The other was from *Vanity Fair*—"Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his head." This Simon described as "upon the whole the most moving single sentence in modern English literature." Mr. Baldwin wound up the debate as he shrewdly detected that this sort of pleading would be fatal if it were left unredeemed. Next morning *The Times* had a heading "Mr. Baldwin to the Rescue."

A fortnight later Simon nearly managed to kiss the rod when he said "If a speech is to be judged, not by the exact words which are used, but by the impression which, I will not say it sought to create, but which has been created about it outside, well then mine was a very unfortunate speech." But Simon, to keep pace with his misfortunes, should be ready to say "peccavi," not once, but many times. Seldom

can a principal minister have climbed down so far and so soon. But he could not eradicate the impression.

Read his speech denouncing the arrest in Russia of the Metropolitan-Vickers engineers. Cricketing metaphors pullulate in descriptions of our House of Commons. Simon was batting on an easy wicket. Russian ideas of justice may have deserved to be hit for sixes, but how Simon exulted as he thumped away! How appropriately his voice broke when he referred to the messages which the unfortunate men wanted to send to their wives and relatives in distant Albion! How he loved the applause raised by his furious appeals to prejudice! The massive Conservative representation could hurrah to their hearts' delight as their devoted adversaries were scorned to death.

One other exploit by counsel for the prosecution will live long in the memory of those who witnessed it. Mr. Winston Churchill had charged Sir Samuel Hoare with committing a breach of privilege by attempting to arrange the evidence to be given before the Joint Select Committee on India. The Committee of Privileges exonerated Hoare. In the subsequent debate Simon sailed in as champion of Hoare and castigator of Churchill. "I begin to think," said Simon with righteous indignation and appropriate majesty of language, "that these *proceedings* are not engineered in order to vindicate the law of Parliament . . . they were started in the hope and belief"—Simon frowned and raised his voice—"that they would bring upon my right honourable Friend the Secretary of State for India ruin!" The forensic eloquence waxed. "At the end of two months, during which he has endured this grievous charge and this

great wrong, he is unanimously acquitted. Instead of the ruin which it was designed to bring upon him he has got his vindication. . . ." And so on. Simon gave a good exhibition of how this kind of thing can be done by an expert. Advocates, please copy. The great Churchill, sensitive and white-faced, sat angrily taking his medicine with muttered and intermittent protests.

Immediately after the German invasion of Bohemia Eden spoke strongly in favour of full military commitments with all those nations who would join us. At the end of the debate Simon defended the Chamberlain policy, said it was to be continued and argued that the country would never sanction a commitment "which might extend over half the world." He was elaborate in his criticisms of our extending our automatic obligations. By 3rd April, after the guarantee to Poland, Simon was able to say, "Accepting as we do, pretty well all of us, this tremendous declaration and all that it involves, . . . we will throw the whole potential strength of Britain into this essential work. That strength must be used if need be . . . to fight." No wonder prominent politicians often say they are impressed with the speed at which things move to-day.

When sanctions against Italy were raised in June 1936 Lloyd George gave one of his most brilliant performances. He quoted the Government manifesto of the General Election seven months earlier. "In the present unhappy dispute between Italy and Abyssinia, here will be no wavering"—this word came out with a world of cunning emphasis—"in the policy we have hitherto pursued." Lloyd George went on, "But most important in that document are the signatures. Their

names are the guarantee that there could be no *wavering*: Stanley Baldwin" (some laughter), "J. Ramsay MacDonald" (the laughter began to become hilarious)—the prince of parliamentary performers turned with a broad and wicked smile towards the best section of his audience—the Opposition Liberals—and then called out "John Simon!" Great peals of laughter rose from everyone everywhere, the Liberals whom Simon had left, the Liberals whom Simon was steadfastly leading, the Tories whom he aspired to lead, and the Labour Party who had never been so honoured.

No doubt Sir John will one day be blessed by a biographer who will do him more than justice. If the writer has missed some noble quality he laments his own blindness. There is certainly one evil which is said to rouse his deepest passions. It is slavery. On this subject Lady Simon, for whom Sir John never conceals his affection, has written a valuable work. Somewhere, deep down beneath the tides of disputation, Simon clutches at the base of the Statue of Liberty.

IV

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL

THE subject-matter of this chapter is wholly agreeable. The only tiresome circumstance is a consciousness that I am quite incapable of doing justice to Mr. Churchill within the compass of a few thousand words. Many volumes could be written about this wayward and magnetic genius. Great men deserve great tributes. They should flow from inspired pens. The mere thought of his style of speech and the majesty of his writing compels an attempt at imitation. What will emerge? Nothing but the faintest of shadows, the dull echo of tremendous thunder.

The physical characteristics and features of prominent men demand the attention of everyone who depicts their characters. Churchill is so peculiar a figure that they are doubly important for our purpose. He is short and thick-set. He seems dedicated by destiny to combat. His battles may be physical or intellectual. He takes great strides over the floor of the House or along the lobbies. As he marches forward he looks full of purpose. His round face is normally fixed with a stern pallor. But his is no elderly severity. He still looks as though the months he spent in his cradle were a specially significant part of his career. A Tory lady, fulminating before the last War against what she imagined were his Satanic works, raged, "The

baby face of that traitor Winston Churchill drives me mad." If she had seen him in the flesh instead of on the pages of the illustrated Press she might have been spared her attacks of insanity. She would in all probability have been impressed by his resolute appearance or melted by his indescribably attractive grin. Nor need she have worried about the safety of England's honour in his charge. Winston Churchill has for long been able to give many of his fellow-citizens lessons in patriotism.

When I first heard him speak I began by thinking he was half-witted. A moment later I was imagining that he had dined too lavishly. I ended by utter capitulation. Young men are impressionable. And I do not forget the shock of disappointment as he opened his mouth and let out a few phrases that halted as he did battle with a slightly ridiculous impediment. Nor was I consoled—I who was bent on hero-worship—when I observed at first hand that the pronunciation of a soft "s" was beyond his vocal powers. Instead I heard the oddest sound. For a moment one of Lewis Carroll's mome raths seemed to have come to life. Here was one outgribing and outgribing publicly. Humpty Dumpty had to explain that outgribing was "something between bellowing and whistling with a kind of sneeze in the middle . . . when you've once heard it, you'll be *quite* content." Churchill produces the opposite effect. Once heard he makes you want more. He always seems to sit down too soon. He is too big a man to be sensitive about this unique crackling noise. He tells us that when he was wanted by the Boers they advertised this disability as a means of identification.



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He is conscious of his own size and knows how to whet the public interest in himself. He warms his audience by constantly inviting them to laugh with him at Winston Churchill. Another master of the same technique is Mr. Lloyd George. "One of the most moderate remarks I have ever been privileged to make;" "I support the Prime Minister; I hope that by so doing I shall do him no harm." He is rebuking Lord Snowden for senile bitterness. "I say to myself, Winston, as you ripen, you must mellow." Only a very few of the hundreds who amuse themselves by imitating him have reproduced his strange conflict with the letter "s." It certainly defies reproduction in print. But his courage may be measured by the manner in which he has almost turned a liability into an asset.

It is impossible to forget his face and his figure. In a stubborn mood he suggests a bulldog. A puckish temper animates him and in a flash he has turned into the most brilliant of clowns. It would be a pretty experiment to see his head beneath the steel casques worn in the seventeenth century. His mischievous smile might then belong to a cavalier who had strayed accidentally on to the General Staff of Oliver Cromwell. Or perhaps he would be most at home in an earlier age, the era of barons who enjoyed territorial sovereignty. He could certainly have fitted into the turmoils of the thirteenth century. Yet the last thing that could be said about him is that he is an anachronism. He is fully alive to all the international and domestic problems of the day, eager to describe and resolve them by an original felicity of phrase. His pronouncements should be read in the light of a

single explanation. Forty years ago he arrived at two philosophies. They were Radicalism and Imperialism. On this basis his dizziest somersaults become rational and almost inevitable.

What are the elements of heredity and environment which have made Winston Churchill the most feared of foes, the most formidable of controversialists, and at last the most universally admired individual in our public life? He never forgets, nor should his critics allow themselves to forget, that he is a grandson of a Duke and a direct descendant of Marlborough. Biology decrees that he shall always be fighting; his nature needs victory as keenly as it loves battle. It has often been said that he belongs to the harder-hitting Edwardian school of politicians. He was born in 1874. But had his birth been postponed for thirty years Winston Churchill would have always found opponents to hit and foes to wound. His father, Lord Randolph Churchill, lived for a mere forty-five years, the last twenty of which were devoted to a political career of terrific, fearless and aggressive activity. By the time he was thirty-seven he had been Secretary of State for India, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and leader of the House of Commons. At the Treasury his principle was economy and he was determined to have his own way. When the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for War, with the support of the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, refused to comply with Lord Randolph's notions of retrenchment, he resigned. It seems that he had conceived about himself the doctrine of indispensability and supposed that Salisbury would give way and apologetically insist on his resumption of office. He

was mistaken. Goschen became Chancellor of the Exchequer and proved a great success. Lord Salisbury went on his way with a massive serenity characteristic of the House of Cecil. Lord Randolph's resignation effected nothing but the premature end of a dazzling career. Eight years later he was cut down in his prime.

Winston Churchill has never yet courted resignation. But he has twice changed his party. Lord Randolph had died at the age of forty-five. By the time that Winston, who was born in 1874, had reached the age of his father's death he had fought in five campaigns; he had held the offices of Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, President of the Board of Trade, Home Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Minister of Munitions; and he had written eight books of importance, one of which was a biography of his father.

He seems early to have formed one firm resolve—if his country is engaged in any fighting he must be in it. He has taken care to move in the midst of great affairs. When a crisis has arisen he has been found in the thick of it. In August it was ten years since he last held an office of profit under the Crown. He has filled that period with political activity. And he has been able to enlarge his contributions to the treasury of English literature. With such a background and such a record of service how does so long a divorce from power and executive authority affect him? He is the most human being alive. If he did not find irksome his present exile from authority he would be less than human. These last ten years have brought him to the considerable age of sixty-five. And the

whole political world is asking, is this the drama's end, or is there yet to be unfolded a more tremendous act?

Since the last War he has been Secretary of State for War and Air, Secretary of State for the Colonies and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Indeed it is almost a puzzle to think of any considerable office which he has not occupied. He is not a lawyer, so the great office of Lord Chancellor has never been open to him. There are in particular three offices which have never been galvanized by his direction. He has not been asked to Co-ordinate Defence. He has never presided over the Foreign Office. He has not been Prime Minister. In theory of course he could resume any of the other offices he has held in former days. What is stopping him? There are three obstacles. There are the mistrust and jealousy of his critics. There is besides his own uncompromising self-sufficiency.

When the fascinating game of Cabinet-building is being played and Churchill is mentioned as a possible Prime Minister one of the players will invariably say "Winston lacks one thing—judgment." Having uttered this pontifical condemnation he will sit back and hope that the candidate will be ruled out. It is certainly a very serious charge. And it is difficult to rebut because the quality which Mr. Churchill is said to lack baffles precise definition. Two very different things may be implied—either on the one hand that he is incapable of reading the popular mind and interpreting the public's transitory fancy, and so fails to do the expedient thing, or else upon the other hand, that, given a set of circumstances, he can seldom if ever make the wise and the right decision. The second failing would be the greatest of defects: the

first disability might elevate him to the highest rank of statesmanship! Only a half-wit would contend that the people always know what is best for them. But let us assume that the second sense is intended. Will he do the wise thing in a difficult situation?

I am reluctant to try to dogmatize in a controversy so lively that it deserves to escape the final fate of a verdict. All I can do is to offer evidence to assist a conclusion. But it is no superfluous caution to bear in mind that, in the course of an incomparably full official life, Churchill has had to make a thousand decisions of greater or less importance, many of them secret and unrecorded. Every minister of Cabinet rank has a like responsibility. Churchill's task has been multiplied many times in excess of the normal.

He began his political life as a Conservative. He was returned at the Khaki election of 1900. After Mr. Chamberlain's part in the partition of Czechoslovakia at the end of September 1938 an active party manager began bustling about with suggestions for an immediate election. "Peace with honour" and "Peace for our time" were, so this astute gentleman intended, to be used for electoral purposes before they lost their fresh lustre. Churchill must have remembered his own entry to Parliament on a wave of national emotion. "Tadpole and Taper are very keen upon having a general election, a sort of, if I may say so, inverted Khaki election." He added some more observations upon what he said would be "an act of historic constitutional indecency." Others had spoken in the same sense, but by the time Churchill had finished any such design there may have been was dead. . . .

The Conservative ascendancy at the beginning of this century was doomed to dwindle rapidly. By the time that Winston Churchill had been in the House for four years Joseph Chamberlain was, by his campaign for Protection, splitting the party he had invaded fifteen years before. Winston was intellectually a Free Trader. In 1904 he joined the Liberals, and with them he remained for nearly twenty years. His return at the landslide of 1906 became a foregone conclusion. Actually before the polls he had been given office by Campbell-Bannerman in the new Liberal Administration as Under-Secretary for the Colonies. Should this transfiguration be called "Political Inconsistency Number One"? Or was Churchill right in joining and helping to lead an immense revulsion against a policy which a great majority of the public thought to be stupid and immoral? If so many of the public were right it is hard to see how the youthful Churchill was wrong. Few men have been more openly ambitious. But why should not desire and duty coincide?

He had to seek re-election on entering the Cabinet in 1908 as President of the Board of Trade. In North-west Manchester Sir William Joynson-Hicks defeated him. This was an early sign that the tide of Liberal triumph was beginning to ebb. But Churchill was immediately nominated for Dundee and sat there from 1908 till he was defeated in 1922 by a prohibitionist named Scrymgeour. His defeat was certainly as much due to the antagonisms his personality provoked as to any virtues possessed by his opponent.

Up till 1922 Winston was at the height of his wonderful energies. As Member for Dundee he



crammed into the period between the ages of thirty-four and forty-eight the maximum of service and enterprise. He will be best remembered as the First Lord who prepared the Navy for the supreme test of the First German War. He may have been the sincerest of Liberals, but he did not regard it as part of a Liberal's duty to ignore what he believed was the palpable German challenge to British sea strength. Consequently he had ready in 1914 an armada of vast size and incomparable fighting power. His disappointment with the outcome of Jutland pervades his account of the naval campaign. He preferred Beatty's courage to Jellicoe's caution. Churchill had conceived the Royal Navy as an instrument with which it was right to take great risks for high stakes.

They say that his conception of the Dardanelles enterprise was masterly but that he was betrayed by others in its execution. I can recall the current chatter when we were losing men by the hundred on the arid slopes of Gallipoli, "It was the fault of that fellow Churchill: he was after something spectacular." Whether this kind of talk was right or wrong Churchill fell beneath a cloud from which his closest friends could not rescue him. He left the Government and went forthwith to the centre of discomfort. He had started life as a soldier and he now arranged to be sent to the front in France. His experiences have been set out by himself with an amount of detail that proves their authenticity. Even in the forties he did not shirk danger. In the mud of Flanders he proved stout and tough.

Before the losses and permutations brought about by the War Churchill had the advantage of working

with men who were at least his intellectual peers. Asquith, a genial Roman, dominated the Parliamentary arena and, from the death of Campbell-Bannerman, presided over a Cabinet that was thick with talent. There was Morley. There was Haldane. Above all there was the stimulating magic of Lloyd George achieving that which Churchill most admired—getting things done. Working in such society Churchill had no cause to feel impatient of inferior intelligence. He may have consumed more than his ration of time at Cabinet meetings but there can hardly have been any opportunity to dominate. He had full scope for his expanding powers and enjoyed the inspiration of contact with men bent on big reforms. But with the War years there came a strange and imponderable break. By the date of the signing of peace some of the greatest of Winston's early colleagues had faded away into resignation or death. It is true that Balfour and Bonar Law had come in. But he was no longer surrounded by the same number of individuals whom he could with propriety admire.

The Armistice, all it meant, all it ended, all it promised, made a challenge to Churchill's sense of history and sense of justice. The Imperialist in him looked out with a proud smile upon the spectacle which should give any descendant of Marlborough the most exquisite delight—Britain victorious. But the whole of pleasure does not consist for him in flags, pageantry and martial music. Read what he has written about this period of frustration and disillusionment and you will concede that he could not have been deceived. He tells us that he sent shiploads of food to starving Germany and that he always

shied at the astronomic exactions proposed against the vanquished. He loathed profiteering and the meanness behind it. There is evidence that he personally would have agreed to a levy on capital. While he might have been excited by the noise of battle and by the exercise of finding language to match those great events of which he had with a few others shared the centre, he knew and felt the millions of tragedies behind the din, the shouting and the drama. Churchill may exult in emergency but he does not lack imagination.

The liberal, the radical and the democrat within him sought for a means whereby mankind could win an honourable escape from these manifold horrors. He was attracted by the great purpose of the League of Nations. Since the War Churchill has had many kinds of political companions including the most extreme die-hards. To many of them the League has been some new thing invented to be ridiculed by the opponents of change. But search Churchill's speeches and you will never find the faintest echo of this folly. On the contrary to him the League has always been "a great and august institution." But he saw from its birth that its value would be lost if it had not the means of enforcing its decisions. The Rule of Law needed to be sustained by power. In *The Aftermath* Churchill dreams about the might-have-been. A new mechanical force contemptuous of frontiers had developed miraculously under the pressure of hostilities. Why should not the Air Forces be pledged to the service of the League of Nations? Failure to appreciate and analyse these convictions has led Churchill's critics to charge him with "instability."

It was at this moment of time that the theory of instability seemed most plausible. Baldwin destroyed the Coalition. By a crushing majority Dundee rejected Churchill at the election of 1922, when he stood as a Liberal adherent of Mr. Lloyd George. Next year when Baldwin sought a mandate for Protection Churchill fared no better as a plain Liberal at West Leicester. For him to be out of the House of Commons when the air of debate was the breath of his nostrils must have been intellectual suffocation. In February 1924 the Abbey Division of Westminster seemed most fortunately to fall vacant through the death of the sitting Member. Winston saw himself steaming into a haven of rest where he would represent a territory with whose historic distinction the City of London alone could compare. Alas for this delightful dream! He stood this time as an Independent. He enacted with a beaming smile the multifarious indignities incidental to a by-election that embraced theatre-land as well as the Palace of Westminster. When the votes were counted the radiant expression was frozen by the anguish of a great calamity. The official Conservative in a total poll of nearly 23,000 defeated him by 43 miserable votes. Winston may well have thought this result the crowning fatuity of politics.

However he had learnt to rise quickly to the surface. A Labour Government in a hopeless minority wrought wonders of conciliation among its miscellaneous opponents. Winston found that the greatest peril to the realm lay in the continuance of a Labour Administration which leant dangerously towards an understanding with the footpads of Moscow. At the General Election of December the Epping Division thought

so too and returned him with a handsome majority as a "Constitutionalist." Churchill was able to identify himself with the integrity of Britain. He asked his electors which they preferred—the Red Flag or the Union Jack? No doubt his sense of humour sometimes allows him to look back with amusement at the label he bore and the things he said. In a few days he was back within the Conservative fold which he had been attacking for twenty years. Baldwin made him Chancellor of the Exchequer. That most astute of judges had always held Winston to be a dangerous man. So he was—dangerous to all colleagues who could not compete with him. At the Treasury no doubt Winston could do little harm either to his party or his leader.

The nation's revenue did not suffer in his hands, though he is associated with the abortive Betting Tax. Once again during the rather sterile years from 1924 to 1929 did Churchill smell powder. The General Strike of 1926 gave him the chance to run an emergency newspaper, the *British Gazette*. To him this convulsion seemed political blackmail and an anarchist conspiracy. His attitude caused people to thank heaven that he did not have the supreme responsibility. They may have forgotten their own proposition that there are degrees of authority and that the higher a man's responsibility the greater may be his moderation.

Now was the moment for Churchill's most irritating foible to show itself. There was only one man of his calibre in the Government—the Earl of Birkenhead, who was in charge of the India Office. When he looked at the majority of his colleagues he felt he was

being required to suffer fools gladly. So he consumed far more of the Cabinet's time and attention than was reasonable. They may have been entertained by his enchanting monologues, but their suspicions were reinforced by his overbearing manner. In their eyes he became the supreme egoist. Winston Churchill began to be his own enemy.

His Imperialism of outlook matched his arrogance of behaviour. He progressed for a time steadily towards the Right and for a space was the darling of the die-hards. When the Conservatives left office in 1929 the stage was set for the Indian controversy. Baldwin felt, rather than thought, that the decent thing would be to set India on the high road towards responsible self-government. To this end he was prepared to co-operate with MacDonald. He felt that we should repeat the mistakes we had made with Ireland if we treated India as the shuttlecock of the parties at Westminster. During the ill-starred Labour Administration this circumstance angered many Conservatives, who saw themselves being deprived of their traditional function as upholders of the Empire in its entirety. Churchill was a conspicuous and well-informed dissident. Things grew more and more uncomfortable for the unfortunate Mr. Baldwin. But he stuck obstinately to his opinion.

Meanwhile much of the burden of opposition was joyously sustained by Winston Churchill. He flung himself into the task of hampering his devoted adversary, Philip Snowden. But he did not spare Ramsay MacDonald; the Prime Minister with his woolly periods and wordy sentimentalities was a perfect target for the shafts of Churchill. It was now that he

produced one of his most telling satires. Here is how, on 28th January, 1931, he introduced what has perhaps become his most famous gibe:

"I spoke the other day, after he had been defeated in an important Division, about his [MacDonald's] wonderful skill in falling without hurting himself. He falls, but up he comes again, smiling, a little dishevelled, but still smiling. . . . I remember, when I was a child, being taken to the celebrated Barnum's Circus, which contained an exhibition of freaks and monstrosities, but the exhibit on the programme which I most desired to see was the one described as 'The Boneless Wonder.' My parents judged that spectacle would be too revolting and demoralizing for my youthful eyes, and I have waited fifty years to see the Boneless Wonder!"

At the financial crisis of 1931 MacDonald was true enough to that similitude to coalesce with Baldwin and Herbert Samuel. Churchill of course was a principal tormentor of the Labour Party, which had gone into opposition. Epping returned him by a majority which was large even at that moment of astronomic margins.

They did not give him office. He found himself in a Parliament teeming with supporters of the National combination to which was opposed a pitiful remnant of fifty Socialists. He quickly designed to catch the ear of the new House. On the second day of the debate on the Address he was cracking jokes in the grand manner. After explaining that he was in no way bound to the Baldwin-MacDonald-Samuel triumvirate he said, "However, I am glad to be able to announce to the House that, if I may without dis-

respect borrow a phrase from the Gracious Speech: 'My relations with foreign Powers continue to be friendly'." Before he sat down he was in a serious passage to say "I do not envy them their offices, but I do envy them their opportunities." He turned to tease the luckless Mr. Lansbury, sitting like a faithful and bewildered sheepdog as the leader of the tiny Opposition. "He has," he said of him, "with perfect sincerity, and with many agreeable turns of phrase and fancy, held up to us always that dim Utopia, which would reduce our civilization to one vast national soup kitchen, surrounded by innumerable municipal bathing pools."

Later on in the same speech he made it clear that he was not going to die in the last ditch on the issue of Free Trade. A gasp was audible from some new Members as the House heard one who had been a principal champion of the system say, "I am sure that the overwhelming wish and intention of the electorate was that we should now definitely abandon our Free Trade system and make a substantial and scientific experiment in general Protection. . . . I for one accept the fact that the nation has decided in favour of a real and great change in our fiscal policy." The reader may decide for himself whether Churchill was displaying an unworthy opportunism or great soundness of judgment. The gasp was in any event a belated explosion of feeling. Churchill had been advocating Protection before the General Election.

I do not know to what extent Hansard is read by the public. To some very politically minded people I am aware that it is a fascinating study. But they are undoubtedly a tiny minority. And even most of

those who claim "to follow what is happening in the House" are content with the lopsided incomplete picture presented by the national newspapers. Most editors know that their readers will not give the time to peruse a full report. Being to a greater or less extent propagandists, they serve up what they think is good for them with the devices of sub-headings and leaded type. That may satisfy the masses of men and women with a mild political interest. But they are missing something if they never probe the pages of Hansard. Any column headed "Mr. Churchill" will yield a pleasurable excitement to all who enjoy literature, oratory and rhetoric. When I begin reading a speech by him I am as closely arrested as by any well-spun yarn of adventure or espionage.

There is a serious temptation to load this chapter with quotations from his speeches. But I must deny myself and my readers a surfeit of that pleasure. They can be read elsewhere by themselves and in their entirety. All I can do is to promise that their English is so fresh and so masterly that the reader's attention will not flag through frustration at not hearing the spoken word. They are more than splendid rhetoric; they are great literature. And they are so witty that, though some of them were delivered years ago, they will cause the most solemn and unsympathetic student to smile or even to chuckle as he reads.

But, it may be asked, why should not Churchill publish them without troubling about their delivery? Is nothing lost when they are read and not heard? The answer is "a great deal is lost." Every argument is pointed by a natural and noble correctitude of

gesture. Churchill's features follow and illustrate the words he utters. His voice arrests and excites. And there is the added stimulus of spontaneous debate. His retorts to those who have already spoken are woven with the most exemplary skill into the texture that he has already fashioned. He does not believe in the possibility of over-preparation. The main outline of his speeches is typed out sentence by sentence. Even the asides, and the minor parentheses, are on the manuscript. Often he seems to forget his notes altogether as he mounts up with wings as an eagle. But the course of the flight has been set. He will pursue it resolutely with occasional digressions before the gusts of wind that beat upon his plumage. One of his habits is to test in advance and in private some of his phrases upon two or three listeners. They will not mind. Is it not flattering to be practised on by the prince of orators? But when the moment arrives and the speech is delivered to a packed, expectant and attentive Chamber the speaker's lips are smacked as though the morsel is being savoured for the first time. Great art is there but it is elaborately concealed. And the man who most enjoys Churchill's speeches is Winston.

He exhibits a variety of moods in turn—satire, attack, warning, tenderness, sentiment. And his private behaviour is equally mercurial. He may be in the most agreeable of tempers. Nobody can give a more courtly, a more amiable, greeting or pay a more graceful compliment. Nobody, when sulkiness descends upon him, can give a more faithful imitation of a bear with a sore head. He is the centre of the universe. It is only with impatience that he can

bother to listen to others as they speak or converse. If it is necessary for him to stay and listen to important speeches by others in authority he will fidget about on the central seat that he always occupies. He will gossip away in a series of half-audible grunts. His jokes may be so irreverent as to threaten a neighbour with convulsions. But he is so attractive a being that these habits will be condoned. How would he find time for all he does if he paid the full measure of conventional attention?

But in the 1931 Parliament he did not have everything his own way. The official Opposition was a mere remnant. Churchill seemed to think that his duty to our Parliamentary institutions demanded that he should oppose. And so he did, but from an unofficial angle. And his conduct produced some surprising reactions. In the budget of 1932 the Beer Tax imposed by Lord Snowden was retained amid many protests from those who felt keenly for the trade and the working man's beverage. In the Committee stage of the Finance Bill a number of Conservatives tabled an amendment moving its reduction. The amendment was called but none of its sponsors was in the Chamber to propose it. The House in Committee proceeded to the next amendment. The movers trooped back into the Chamber in confusion, shame and disappointment. An hour later Mr. Churchill, constituting himself the champion of the unhappy defaulters, rose and took the unusual course of moving to report Progress so that the Beer Tax could be discussed. He made a short speech accompanied by angry and derisive interruptions from all sides. George Lansbury saw his chance. With a

fine fury he delivered a terrific attack on the man who had so mercilessly held him up to ridicule. "I consider it," said he, "sheer audacity and effrontery on the part of the Right Honourable Gentleman to walk into the Chamber at this hour of the night and standing up bully the Government. . . . I will tell him what ought to have been told him long ago. He usurps a position in this House as if he had a right to walk in, make his speech, walk out, and leave the whole place as if God Almighty had spoken. . . . He never listens to any other man's speech but his own."

There was so much truth in this astonishing outburst that the House screamed with delight and roared its applause. All Churchill could do was to mutter interruptions such as "Join the Government!" At last Lansbury said, "You don't know anything about it, so hold your tongue." Churchill jumped up and asked the Chairman whether "the expression was to come into our Parliamentary vocabulary." The Chairman observed "If the Right Honourable Gentleman had said to me, 'I should be glad if the Right Honourable Gentleman the Member for Epping would hold his tongue' it would have been quite in order," and let Mr. Lansbury continue. This he did to the accompaniment of more angry interruptions from Churchill. So Lansbury said, "There is with children a sort of habit that, when other people are speaking, they really cannot hold their tongues. He has not grown out of his first childhood, or else he is going into his second childhood." George Lansbury had an hour of supreme triumph. At the psychological moment he had expressed with poetic truth what

hundreds of others had been feeling. Some knowing victims of wishful thinking said to one another, "This will finish Winston." They were profoundly mistaken. There he was next day back in the Chamber, as pugnacious a rogue elephant as ever.

Churchill will be remembered best in that Parliament for his strenuous opposition to the Government's India policy. His conduct smacked of cantankerousness. Somehow he gave the impression that he was more interested in embarrassing Mr. Baldwin and company than in serving the highest interests of the British Commonwealth. He declined to serve on the Joint Select Committee and discovered grounds for accusing the Secretary of State of improperly influencing the evidence to be submitted. The resultant hearings and findings of the Committee of Privileges constituted a painful repulse. At Conference after Conference of the Conservative Party he and his henchmen attacked the policy. But Baldwin won through; on his side there was a great body of influence and intelligence. In the House Churchill fought the huge Bill on the main principles and then clause by clause. But the Government were not shaken. The only casualty was the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, who went sick towards the end of the Committee stage. After the struggle was over Churchill announced his intention of loyally accepting the verdict of Parliament. This was a graceful gesture in an excellent tradition. But what else could he do and what good had he done? In 1935 Epping sent him back with as large a majority as ever.

His most grievous experience in recent years was the pain he underwent at the abdication of Edward

VIII. If he really entertained hopes of starting a "King's Party" his "judgment" was abysmally at fault. But with Churchill it may not have been a question of judgment in the sense of taking the popular line. There was during this funereal episode a crop of stories about Winston trying to persuade the King to retain the Crown and favour a faction. I do not accept them. When with tears streaming down his cheeks he repeatedly begged Mr. Baldwin not to do anything "irrevocable" I believe he was animated by an affection and loyalty for his young Sovereign that deserved the high title of love. He had known him and assisted at his progress for most of his princely career. For a monarch endowed with King Edward's gifts there must surely, Churchill felt, be abundant latitude allowed, nay demanded, by a grateful people. He may not have been wrong. But he was mistaken. In the eyes of the British people Edward VIII was doing the one unforgivable thing. He was degrading the monarchy. They would have sustained him with fresh pillars of loyalty if, at the last, he had forgone his desire. But Edward chose not to make the sacrifice. Nor did he want the chivalrous allegiance of his old counsellor. The man who suffered the greatest injury and the bitterest pain may well have been Winston Churchill.

Yet even this horrid event, culminating in his own utter confusion and distress and involving the citadel of the Constitution, is secondary to the series of warnings which he has uttered over the last five or six years. The public, with the shadow of war lengthening across the island, forgets his stumblings and provocations, and pays tardy tribute to his

vision. In the matter of German rearmament and the real menace of the Nazi dictatorship his voice and his judgment have never faltered. He it was who first described the dimensions of the armaments Hitler was building. The public were sceptical. Baldwin denied his figures and later withdrew his denial. But Baldwin was so reliable and Churchill so untrustworthy that Baldwin remained the object of public esteem.

Churchill was never taken in by the dreadfully successful pro-German propaganda that flooded over this country. Since the militarization of the Rhineland in 1936, with one serious set-back, Churchill's reputation for clearheadedness has been rising. The one reverse was the occasion of the Munich agreement when most of the nation suspended their powers of judgment to acclaim "peace with honour." But there were enough people awake to the improbability of Hitler's character having undergone a magic change through contact with Mr. Chamberlain to give Churchill a hearing. In a few short months he and those who agreed with him were bitterly vindicated. It is but rarely that a politician enjoys any credit for being right. But Churchill has, in matters of foreign policy, become so oracular that the validity of his warnings is causing people to take note.

I am bound to give a few further quotations. In November 1936 Churchill repeated in the House his warning about our unpreparedness. "The Government go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all powerful to be impotent.

So we go on preparing more months and years—precious, perhaps vital, to the greatness of Britain—for the locusts to eat. They will say to me ‘A Minister of Supply is not necessary, for all is going well.’ I deny it.” It was nearly two years later that the agreement of Munich was being excused in some quarters on the ground of our relative weakness. After a further six months Mr. Chamberlain made a Minister of Supply out of a distinguished linguist. It was at the end of the debate from which we have just quoted that Mr. Baldwin explained that he had delayed rearming because such an appeal would have lost him the General Election.

In February 1938 Eden resigned. Chamberlain was contemplating the agreement with Italy. Here are some of the objections made by Churchill:

“The dictator Powers of Europe are striding on from strength to strength and from stroke to stroke, and the Parliamentary democracies are retreating abashed and confused. On the other hand, behind this fine façade, there was every sign that the Italian Dictator, at any rate, was in a very difficult position: the industrious, amiable Italian people long overstrained; everything in the country eaten up in order to augment the magnificence of the State; taxes enormous; finance broken; officials abounding; all kinds of indispensable raw materials practically unpurchasable across the exchange; Abyssinia a curse, a corpse bound on the back of the killer; Libya and Spain, perhaps 400,000 men overseas, all to be maintained by a continuous drain on the hard-driven, ground-down people of Italy. One would have thought that these corrective processes upon external

arrogance and ambition might have been allowed to run their course for a while. . . .”

Did Mr. Chamberlain's handling of foreign affairs reduce that “external arrogance and ambition”? The Anglo-Italian agreement did not prevent the Italo-German military alliance of May 1939. Germany has annexed Austria. Churchill urges on 14th March, 1938, a guarantee for Czechoslovakia. “To English ears, the name of Czechoslovakia sounds outlandish. No doubt they are only a small democratic State, no doubt they have an army only two or three times as large as ours, no doubt they have a munitions supply only three times as great as that of Italy, but still they are a virile people; they have their treaty rights, they have a line of fortresses, and they have a strongly manifested will to live freely.” But had Mr. Chamberlain any right when giving his melancholy broadcast at the height of the September crisis to describe Czechoslovakia to English ears as “a far-away country of which we know nothing”?

Churchill ended this same speech with a great plea for Collective Security. “If a number of states were assembled around Great Britain and France in a solemn treaty for mutual defence against aggression; if they had their forces marshalled in what you may call a Grand Alliance; if they had their Staff arrangements concerted; if all this rested, as it can honourably rest, upon the Covenant of the League of Nations, in pursuance of all the purposes and ideals of the League of Nations; if that were sustained, as it would be, by the moral sense of the world; and if it were done in the year 1938—and, believe me, it may be the last chance there will be for doing it—then I say that you might

even now arrest the approaching war." It was not done. Appeasement was preferred to the Grand Alliance. All know the consequences. In the spring of 1939 the British Government began feverishly struggling to carry out the policy which Churchill pressed upon them twelve months before.

On 24th March Chamberlain issued a warning but gave no guarantee. Churchill in his speech used a metaphor which gripped the imagination of his hearers. "I have watched this famous island descending incontinently, fecklessly, the stairway which leads to a dark gulf. It is a fine broad stairway at the beginning, but after a bit the carpet ends. A little farther on there are only flagstones, and a little farther on still these break beneath your feet."

Two more quotations. Munich came, but Churchill was not to be deceived. In a speech on 5th October he observed that our hearts went out to the German people, but they had no power. "There can never be friendship between the British democracy and the Nazi Power, that Power which spurns Christian ethics, which cheers its onward course by a barbarous paganism, which vaunts the spirit of aggression and conquest, which derives strength and perverted pleasure from persecution, and uses, as we have seen, with pitiless brutality the threat of murderous force." And he ended, "Do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time."

Half a year had barely passed before Hitler tore up the Munich agreement and marched into Prague.

It can hardly be wondered at if the Members of the Government stir uneasily on the Treasury Bench when Winston Churchill strides into the Chamber; nor that they are reluctant to give him their confidence and the responsibility of high office. Events have shown that on the cardinal issues of policy he has been right for the last five years and they have been wrong. He is as big a man as any two members of the Cabinet taken together. He may not exhibit Simon's dialectics or Chamberlain's phlegm. But he and Lloyd George are the only two men in the House of Commons who possess any of the elements of greatness.

There is no man better equipped to preserve us from defeat. There were few men as likely to stave off the calamity of war itself. Is he to be recognized for his wise and absorbing patriotism? Or is he to be penalized for his countless indiscretions? Will the Socialists forget his mortal assaults upon their policy and personnel? Several years ago a Labour Congress passed a resolution opposing the rearmament of Germany. In the House Churchill quoted this opinion and then barked out: "What is going to prevent her rearming? A card vote of the T.U.C.?" Has moderate opinion forgiven his Indian antics and his personal and public anguish before the Abdication? Will the die-hards accept him, or do they cherish the discredited ineptitudes of isolation? Can they really wish us to be, in Churchill's own language, "edged and pushed further down the slope in a disorderly expostulating crowd of embarrassed States?" Is the

true prophet for ever to be without the supreme honour of national leadership, to be, by a cruel anticlimax, thrust aside in the moment of Britain's direst need with the shallow and ignorant taunt "What you lack is judgment"?

V

MR. ANTHONY EDEN

ON 22nd February, 1938, in the House of Commons Mr. Winston Churchill said of Mr. Anthony Eden, who two days before had resigned the office of His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that he seemed to be "the one fresh figure of first magnitude arising out of the generation which was ravaged by the War." A Labour Member of Parliament unkindly called, loudly enough to be heard on the floor of the House, but with hardly enough voice to be audible in the Press Gallery, "What about Hore-Belisha?" Mr. Hore-Belisha, who is not prone to personal embarrassment, dropped his eyes in unusual confusion. Whatever may be Hore-Belisha's aspirations, few will be found to rank him as high as Anthony Eden.

"The one fresh figure"—not for the first time, nor for the last, Mr. Winston Churchill hit the mark with an inevitable felicity of phrase. By an unhappy mischance this description was, with the passage that surrounded it, subjected to the pruning-knife in the collection of Mr. Churchill's speeches compiled by Master Randolph and entitled *Arms and the Covenant*. That seems a pity. The phrase is fine and challenges analysis.

Anthony Eden is a figure that looks fresh. His physical characteristics play an important part in his career. He has a strange gait. He rolls slightly from side to side as he strides along like an earnest and amiable school-prefect. He has often been called "well dressed" and has been accorded a high place of honour among wearers of well-cut and expensive clothes. Yet his movements are so boyish and his body is so spare that he might well be wearing his first suits made to measure. If a malicious sprite were to clip off his moustache he would shine out in half-naked adolescence.

The speculation asserts itself "How conscious is Anthony of himself?" No doubt he has much ground for satisfaction when his toilet is over. And a boyish trait is an obstinate inability to leave his moustache alone. It is an excellent military growth, but his fingers are always straying to his upper lip as though to explore a new symptom of manhood. He can be posed to yield an impressive photograph. If you knew nothing of the subject you would say "Here is a handsome bright-eyed young field-officer." But, thank Heaven, he would never excel as a film actor.

He is no school-girl's idol. A young maiden who, after seeing his photograph or spying him from afar on a public occasion, were then fluttered by an unexpected introduction would sustain a mild and wholesome shock. She would exchange a soft limp handshake with a man on whom the burden of office had left a deep mark for ever. His forehead is heavily furrowed. His manner is serious if a matter of the slightest importance is raised. Serious too are his features without seeming very strong. His chin might



MR ANTHONY EDEN

"A firm spirit."

with advantage have been bigger. His smile is bright but neither facetious nor adolescent. Seriousness quickly supervenes. Above his collar his hair is beginning to be flecked with grey. If he had no glasses on he would screw up his eyes to see his fan's face. Or he might peer at her through the heavy lenses of his spectacles. In fact she would have to converse with a man of anxious and intellectual exterior who would need severe treatment from a make-up artist before he could safely walk the stage.

And then her preconceptions would suffer another blow. Whether they talked of the weather, or literature, or politics there would be no enchanting tones of voice; no resonant chords to suggest Gary Cooper or Godfrey Tearle; no tones that recall Mr. Ivor Novello; just a rather high-pitched, tired, almost blasé delivery. Personally he is extremely agreeable. He has some tricks of manner which disarm companions. The Old Etonian-Army background can be seen as he drawls out a "What?"; thus he gives himself time to think when he is asked for his opinion. It is a gentle avuncular little sound, half pitying, remotely condescending. Some colonels can say no more. But Major Eden can do better. He has culled a priceless device from the repertoires of Baldwin and Lloyd George. However dull or stupid or obscure his companion may be he will invite his opinion as though it is something worth having. Immediately the little person swells with self-importance and springs into top gear. He forgets that he is speaking to a man of deep knowledge and great experience; in a moment he is talking away to an apparently interested listener. He comes away with a profound sense of the intelligence,

politeness and charm of the statesman he has been lecturing. Thus do democratic leaders endear followers or create toleration for themselves among ever-widening circles.

Or some unknown may feel a hand on his shoulder and, as he turns round, he sees the carefully groomed head and the solicitous features. Eden may have a compliment to pay about a speech which was helpful or not too abysmally bad. Or he may have information to convey. This is said to be done briskly, adequately, but with economy of phrase. The honoured individual, especially if Anthony makes an appeal to his discretion, once more glows and vows abiding loyalty—for the time being.

When Eden returned to the back benches he was able to make a number of strange contacts during debates. From the Gallery he could be seen conversing in lively whispers that were never discourteously prolonged with men who found every excuse to deride the policies which Eden had tried to pursue. Their outlook must have been strange to him. Perhaps he felt even more strongly, for they were the type who took their happiest joy in cheering the Prime Minister and seeing his opponents scored off. They were ready in private to deplore Eden's statements and to castigate his policy. But genial contact with the former Foreign Secretary gave them pleasure and was quite within the practice of the House of Commons. When pressed they will say, "Oh, I don't deny that Anthony is a very decent fellow." For the six years and a half that he was in office they hilariously cheered his more successful sallies against the Opposition and half apprehensively acclaimed his regular

and cautious flights into the realms of idealism. It is not beyond human possibility that they might form the habit of cheering him as their leader.

Support for this personal development can be found in many quarters. Plenty of Conservatives are shrewd enough to appraise Anthony as a first-class electoral asset. He is—or was—widely regarded as someone who set a higher value on principle than upon office. There is in this country a large nonconformist section, too small to form the substance of a party, but big enough to turn the scale at a General Election. This remnant, deriving from pre-War Liberalism, deprecates the wilder enthusiasms of Labour and would not reject an excuse for voting for a Conservatism which is democratic enough and righteous enough. Eden supplies—or supplied—this element. Much of his work has been directed, perhaps with little success, to arresting the march of dictatorships. And many of his speeches are so full of the right sentiments as almost to be fit for delivery as sermons. Here then is a considerable floating vote which Eden might net for the triumphant satisfaction of the comfortable middle classes.

But not only can he sound virtuous, he can look “nice.” To-day the female vote in Great Britain outnumbered the men by hundreds of thousands. Even though a near view of Eden is mercifully disillusioning he looks grand in the distance or silent upon a picture postcard. Women persist in thinking he is “lovely.” Although I have shown that he is not—at all events not according to the agreed standards—he certainly shines by comparison with some of the other candidates for the Premiership. He cannot be called “hard-

faced." No folds of surplus fat have deformed his figure. Unlike those of some others, his features are a gift to a skilful photographer, instead of a desperate problem. It is hardly to be supposed that the managers of the Tory Party have forgotten the qualities Eden displayed in the Sales Department when the League of Nations was being sold at the General Election of 1935. It has been said that back-benchers would go up to him before and after the campaign saying, "You did me a lot of good in my constituency."

Besides objections to his policy there is inevitably the jealousy stimulated by success in a young man. But this pill has been swallowed before. There cannot be much more resentment at his becoming Prime Minister in 1942 than at his having been Foreign Secretary in 1936. But you need something more than presentability to be the democratic leader of the Party of Power and Education. Has Mr. Eden that quality which Kipling described as "essential guts"? To put the matter even more brutally, is he too much of a "gentleman" to trample down rivals and opponents?

Some kind of answer can be found in his language and bearing on critical occasions. It is worth while reading his speech of resignation on 21st February, 1938. It was dignified and well expressed. It was free from complaint or recrimination. In the light of Germany's violent entry into Austria less than three weeks afterwards one passage seems ominous and significant. "I should not be frank with the House if I were to pretend that it (i.e., the opening of negotiations with Italy) is an isolated issue as between the Prime Minister and myself. It is not. Within the last few weeks upon one most important decision of

foreign policy which did not concern Italy at all the difference was fundamental." The chamber buzzed momentarily with whispered speculation. Even now it is not known for certain whether Eden had Austria in mind, whether he was aware of what was coming to Vienna, and, if so, whether he wanted to take the risk of standing firm against Hitler's designs. The last sentences are important. "I do not believe that we can make progress in European appeasement . . . if we allow the impression to gain currency abroad that we yield to constant pressure. I am certain that progress depends above all on the temper of the nation, and that temper must find expression in a firm spirit. That spirit, I am confident, is there. Not to give voice to it is, I believe, fair neither to this country nor to the world." It is these sentences that carry the maximum of punch. They are very adequate; they hint at much, but discreetly state little. Somehow, when delivered, they fell vaguely short of the terrific occasion.

With Mr. Eden resigned his lieutenant, Lord Cranborne, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. He followed Eden with another speech of "personal explanation." His statement was the more powerful of the two. Till the day of resignation "Bobbety," as his friends call him, seemed to be a far lighter piece of artillery. He had been Eden's Parliamentary Private Secretary and had accompanied him to Geneva and on his various expeditions to continental capitals. When Eden was elevated in 1935 to the novel office of "Minister without Portfolio for League of Nations Affairs" Cranborne became Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Those who did not know his

merits busily murmured that here was an instance of Tory nepotism at its worst—another undeserved dignity for a member of the Cecil clan. His performances in debate and at Question Time tended to justify this complaint. He would wave aside sound and fair criticism by attempts at facetiousness. His answers to Winston Churchill and Lloyd George might have come from a fresh-tongued undergraduate.

How deceptive are these appearances! His work at Geneva, oral and written, was masterly. And when the test of character came he stood out in the House of Commons with the manner of Hippocleides but the voice of Pericles. His limbs are even less co-ordinated than Eden's. Like many other Cecils he is round-shouldered. His nose is straight and prominent and he generally seems to be smiling behind his spectacles. An undistinguished appearance is not improved by his uncontrollable substitution of "w" for "r." In his mouth "th" becomes "f" or "v." Those who know him not would say "Here is a fellow of a poor physique which matches a second-rate intellect." After a few conversations, in which no attempt is made to play the great man, the first impressions begin to be dissipated. You discover a man of playful tongue but passionate sincerity of spirit.

He stood up with a becoming assumption of modesty which he may or may not have felt. "In compawison wiv ve wesignation of a Foweign Secwetawy, ve wesignation of an Under-Secwetawy is a vewy small affair. It hardly wuffles ve surface of politics." A member of the Opposition made the well-meant but absurd interjection "It's loyal, anyhow!" Lord Cranborne's loyalties sustain "pwinciples" and not

personalities. He explained why he agreed with Eden. Then came the rhetorical thunderbolt. He specified the various ways by which the Italians could give evidence of goodwill. "I must confess vat in default of such evidence I am afwaid vat for His Majesty's Government to enter on official conversations would be wegarded not as a contwibution to peace, but as a suwwender to blackmail!" This phrase embodied in a flash the contempt of the House of Cecil for something that one of its most important representatives deemed to be moral cowardice. The noise that followed was like a lid blowing off a saucepan. Mr. Churchill, sitting two benches below the retiring Ministers, cheered so loudly that the scars of his motor accident showed in deep ruts upon a purple countenance. Some branches of the Cecil family have deprecated this robustness of language. But why need Cranborne care? He is doomed before so very long to take his father's place in the Lords. Why should not the future Lord Salisbury tell the whole truth?

Cranborne, because of his lordly fate, cannot in these days be considered as a possible Prime Minister—unless we remove that slightly ridiculous constitutional bar which prevents a peer from sitting or speaking in the Commons. Since resignation he has spoken quite as well as Eden. And on that 21st of February he exhibited the one quality which Eden seems so sadly to lack, the power to hit hard regardless of consequences. Could Eden have used the words "Surrender to Blackmail"? He might be on the point of playing thus the authentic spokesman of Democracy. But, as they were forming themselves, by some unhappy magic that badge of genteel inhibition, the tie

with the thin blue stripes on the broad black ground would administer a little tweak of warning—and the words would die away in his throat. “My dear man, you really can’t say that!” This delicacy is to be deplored: Cranborne also is entitled to wear an Old Etonian tie.

More than seven months passed before Eden again spoke in the House of Commons. The Anschluss came and passed a few days after his resignation. It was too short a period for him to intervene with a gracefully worded “I told you so!” But among all who possessed knowledge or feeling the anxieties about Czechoslovakia grew and grew. The climax of the year’s anguish was reached on 30th September at Munich. From Monday, 3rd October, till Friday 6th, there rolled on the debate in which were heard some of the scores of Members of the House of Commons who wished to speak in eulogy, comment or criticism of Neville Chamberlain.

On the Monday Anthony Eden did all three things before a full House. His praise and comment were direct. His criticism was oblique, and most gentlemanly. His penultimate sentence struck the note in which he persisted for months to follow. “If there ever were a time for a call for a united effort by a united nation, it is my conviction that that time is now.” His whole speech would repay close attention on the part of those who would like a balanced and objective presentation from one who had the necessary knowledge. It is impossible to decide whether this statesmanlike utterance was actuated by any deep motive, and, if so, whether it was partly personal or wholly patriotic. It reads

most admirably; but that is not always the best compliment to pay a speech. Eden spoke for nearly three-quarters of an hour in the early evening before the House had begun to grow weary. His peroration roused some lukewarm applause.

The next day, for a mere fifteen minutes, at a moment when the Chamber was beginning to empty for dinner, Cranborne made his contribution. He seemed pale with shame and suppressed passion. A Cecil may be expected to know the meaning of the word "honour." At once Cranborne was attacking Chamberlain's maladroitness appropriation of Disraeli's phrase "Peace with Honour." "Peace he certainly brought back to us, and were is not one of us who will not wish to fank him wiv a full heart for vat priceless gift . . . but where is honour? I have looked and looked but I cannot see it. It seems to me a wicked mockewy to descwibe by so noble a name ve agweement which has been weached." So he went on, sparing neither Hitler nor Chamberlain.

Once again the noble lieutenant's sentences were more telling than the speech of his former chief. When the news of the Munich terms came through Eden may have winced at the "wicked mockery" of "Peace with Honour." But could he bring himself to brand Chamberlain's arrogance with such language? The answer must be "No," and the reason must be sought. For Eden is not without verbal resource.

If ever there was a propitious moment for a revolt, that moment was Munich. Austria gone, Czechoslovakia ruined, the "firm spirit" for which he had pleaded seven months before quite absent, the country bewildered and relieved, but half ashamed of its relief

—such was the union of favourable conditions. Anthony could have brandished a sword; he preferred to wave the notes of a sermon. He would have been the “key man.” Winston Churchill might have jumped into the saddle and become Prime Minister, but no revolt that did not include Eden could have hoped for success.

On what support could Eden have counted if he had chosen this moment? The dissident Conservatives, i.e., those who abstained from voting in the Munich debate, would have been sure to rally to his side. Numerically they were small, but qualitatively they were not to be despised. Besides Eden and Cranborne there were Duff Cooper, Churchill, Amery and Lord Wolmer—and about two score more, most of whom were willing to think for themselves rather than to echo automatically the verbally inspired pronouncements of the Leader. Moreover there were plenty more in the Conservative Party who managed to enter the Government Lobby but did so in a mood of cheerless humiliation. A clearer call might have brought out more members of the Cabinet than Duff Cooper. But of that no one can as yet be certain, as Cabinet secrecy is a real thing. Walter Elliot, Oliver Stanley, W. S. Morrison and Malcolm MacDonald may or may not have been on the point of resignation.

Most of the Opposition Liberals, led by Sir Archibald Sinclair, who had been enjoining the Prime Minister to “recall the Right Honourable Member for Warwick and Leamington”, would, it may be safely assumed, have switched into line behind Eden—and Churchill—under the double impulse of self-preservation and moral exaltation. A country which prefers the easily

comprehended arrangement of two parties preserves an electoral system which discourages the existence of more than one Opposition. But the total Liberal voting strength spread over the whole country is not to be despised. Most of the Labour Party would at that moment have joined in a supreme combined effort to defeat Chamberlain and his followers. For once the machine would have clanked less loudly than the call of national necessity. The opportunity was visible to Eden behind a transparent curtain. He chose to reject it. Instead he preferred to deliver a speech of documentary excellence culminating in an appeal for "unity."

This unexceptionable plea has often been repeated in subsequent speeches in this country and in a number of strangely uninspired articles which he has found time to write in the Press. Unity for what? Unity under whom? Neither what Eden says nor what he writes has supplied an answer to these very pertinent questions. He found unity under Chamberlain personally impossible, but when he urges unity without specifying an alternative leader he places under a debt of gratitude the very Prime Minister whom he found it impossible to continue serving. Here one may express the hope that Eden will enliven his style of writing. When speaking he achieves perfect presentation with occasional approaches to brilliance. With a pen his performance is often disappointing, flat and platitudinous.

Can it be that he occasionally regrets his holiday from office? A rumour was spread in February 1938 that he was physically unwell. It was an untruth. Six and a half years of continuous and increasingly

burdensome labours may have justified a short vacation but would scarcely have warranted a first-class crisis in the Government. Was he prodded into resignation by his friend and confidant Bobbety Cranborne? The Under-Secretary probably had greater strength of character: he certainly had the advantage of slight seniority and fuller detachment. The supporters of Chamberlain suddenly discovered that, just before Eden resigned, he had shown great and unwonted irritability. But that condition was hardly pathological. He has a hot temper which is usually under control but has sometimes served him well. He had shown it to Mussolini. He must have been intensely "irritated" when Chamberlain, directly he became Prime Minister, wrote on his own initiative a letter of fraternal greetings to the Italian dictator. It must have been an "irritating" thing to find Chamberlain, whose reputation was based on finance and local administration, taking progressively more control of the Foreign Office. No doubt each of them found the other "irritating" and uncongenial.

These conjectures do not convince. A more plausible theory declares that Eden is resolved to become the leader of the Conservative Party at an early date. Circumstances may also demand that political solvent for major crises—a coalition. If so, the unity he has preached will stand him in good stead. He perhaps hoped to lead the Tory Party along a path of his own design. So he abstained from violent attack or even the semblance of recrimination. He was discreet and thoroughly inoffensive. The blows he dealt were hardly distinguishable from affectionate caresses. So, while possibly, though not by any means certainly, he

may win favour with other political figures of great influence, he risks wounding with disappointment thousands of ordinary men and women who had regarded him as a white hope.

With a good deal of justification he was thought of as a willing spokesman of the oppressed. Small nations, minorities and refugees saw in Eden the symbol of British understanding and decency. An idea of the hopes he used to arouse can be discerned in one incident. On 21st May, 1938, occurred the first crisis over Czechoslovak independence. The week-end was loud with rumours of war. A body of Jews contrived to believe that Eden had been reinstated as Foreign Secretary. Their features glowed; for they identified Eden with resistance to cruel tyranny. But their belief shared the fate of other feats of wishful thinking.

Again, in the winter after his resignation, Eden addressed in the Queen's Hall a packed meeting organized by the League of Nations Union. Lord Lytton, as Chairman, laid foundations on which Eden could have built a towering platform of success. Too faithfully did Eden observe the convention that such platforms must be non-partisan. Never was Milton's line more fully applicable, "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed." When votes of thanks were being proposed the audience roared with relief at Lady Violet Bonham-Carter's caustic sallies of unsatisfied irony.

Eden has expressed a deep concern about the wasteful idleness to which the young unemployed are being condemned. The Ministry of Labour was a political death-trap till it reverberated with the terrific

tones of Mr. Ernest Brown. But even he may tire or trip. And some predict that Eden may succeed him. Thus might Chamberlain strengthen his Government and electoral prospects by the accession of a popular former Foreign Secretary. There is no reason why Eden should not discharge that job as competently and sympathetically as anyone else. But his actual qualifications and experience rather support his claims to the Foreign Office or the Premiership.

At Oxford, after the War, he took a First Class in Oriental Languages. Since December 1923 he has sat for Warwick and Leamington, where he can stay, if he likes, for ever—provided there is no deviation from Toryism. In 1926 Austen Chamberlain when Foreign Secretary made him his Parliamentary Private Secretary. The half-brother of that Prime Minister with whom Eden was to declare himself in fundamental disagreement formed a very high opinion of him. In 1931 Eden's chance came: he was made Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. He was then thirty-four. With his experience under the wing of Sir Austen, Geneva and its ways were thoroughly familiar to him. If Eden had been five years older and Foreign Secretary in 1931 the course of history might have been different. At Geneva personal amenity matters. To the foreigner, as to his fellow-countrymen, Eden possesses plenty. Even the Disarmament Conference might not have failed. For Eden made things go smoothly when he was free from the paralysing presence of Sir John Simon. An agreeable personality had from time to time its chance. The policies which during this period achieved the solutions may not have been Eden's own children, but to him, as spokes-

man for Great Britain, must go the main credit for Europe's safe survival of the dispute between Hungary and Yugoslavia and for the international policing of the Saar.

Before Simon had been removed to the Home Office in 1935 by the belated dissatisfaction of the Conservative Party the storm was already brewing above Ethiopia. Eden seemed to be tying down Mussolini and Aloisi to a number of pacific declarations. But the Italian undertakings were lies. The Italian attack began and Eden became identified with Hoare's sanctions policy. An election was fought on high moral principles. Early in December Laval twisted the luckless Hoare into agreement with proposals which seemed a negation of those principles. Immediately Eden saw how detestably impossible the situation was. He was frantic with disgust. Mr. Baldwin's "sealed lips" did not avail to prevent his swallowing Hoare's resignation. In January 1936, at the age of thirty-eight, Eden, the "Minister for League of Nations Affairs," had become Foreign Secretary. I cannot tell whether Eden's main interest is his own career. But I am quite sure that he did not deliberately seek this particular bound forward. There seemed to be no one else for Baldwin to promote.

He was fortunate in his chief but profoundly unlucky in the course of events. Baldwin was so trusting, and so thankful for an excuse not to interfere, that he left his "blue-eyed boy" comparatively alone. But Hitler chose this moment to administer one of those shocks which Europe has now grown used to expecting from him. He occupied the Rhineland with his military forces. This act was a breach of Locarno. According

to the opinion of Austen Chamberlain, who negotiated the Treaty for Great Britain, we were bound under its terms to come to the assistance of France in expelling the Germans from the demilitarized zone. It is not possible to say whether Eden shared that view. Germany was left in military possession, though the task of turning her out was at the moment well within the powers of France and Great Britain, and would have stemmed the progressive deterioration that flooded on so fatefully to Munich. But the public asked the simple question, "Why should not Germany put her own troops into her own territory?" Indeed many simple folk, blinded as they were by the pro-German propaganda with which the Press reeked and smoked, were inclined to applaud and shout "Heil Hitler!" When Eden spoke, in the debate nearly three weeks after Germany's re-entry, no doubt oppressed by the prevailing sentimentality, he produced the following strange sentence: "I am not prepared to be the first British Foreign Secretary to go back on a British signature." Wondrous are the uses of rhetoric.

In the summer sanctions against Italy were raised and Eden stood sorrowfully amidst the havoc made inevitable by the duplicity of Laval and the timidity of Hoare. The principal preoccupation of the remainder of his period of office was the Spanish Civil War. He had one more triumph before Neville Chamberlain assumed full control—the Nyon Conference, under which submarine piracy in the Mediterranean was stamped out. For the moment collective action, the goal of Eden's endeavours which had been so often derided by the sceptics, stood out as the only method of ensuring sanity. The

occasion of resignation and the atmosphere of the Autumn crisis have already been described. At the end of 1938 Mr. Chamberlain bestowed a strange blessing on Eden's entirely unofficial visit to the United States. It is said that this brief journey was a great success, and that the young women of America were vastly more demonstrative than their colder cousins in England. One disappointment seems, however, not to be in store for those who have had high hopes of Eden's political future. The talk of his being Ambassador to Washington died away. Eden a peer and an ambassador would have presented a supreme anti-climax.

No doubt he would discharge such duties with a wholly satisfactory elegance. Mrs. Eden would add to his dignity. She is wealthy, dark and graceful. Perhaps she will never be able to appeal to democracy with the affectionate amplitude of Lady Baldwin or Mrs. Neville Chamberlain. But she will not let down her husband if after all he becomes Prime Minister. Her silences indeed may be golden. Before long we may see a wholly new type at No. 10 Downing Street—a serious overgrown boy, a friendly well-mannered undergraduate, a man who looks like a soldier but thinks like an artist, one of whom his friends are so fond that, with an almost feminine tenderness, they speak of him as "*Dear Anthony*"!

VI

MR. DUFF COOPER

At a time when an unqualified devotion to France was suspect in most quarters Sir Austen Chamberlain proclaimed that he loved her like a woman. Similarly one of the governing emotions in Mr. Duff Cooper has been an intense affection for the sister democracy across the Channel, combined with a profound mistrust of Germany. From his lips you will seldom hear the conventional discrimination between the German rulers and the German people. He cannot avoid taking sides in the secular antagonism between Teuton and Gaul and he stands with the Gaul. To him the present German régime is simply a manifestation of a brutish and brutal facet of the German character. That Germany repels him does no credit to the German people. His respect and regard are things worth having, for he is a highly accomplished man who was for long falsely estimated as a light-weight.

As he has progressed in responsibility and passed through ever sharpening crises he has developed significantly. Neither in behaviour nor in appearance is he any longer the Duff Cooper of ten years ago. To-day he is someone to reckon with whereas till a short time ago he was treated as a promising but indiscreet young politician. He has lately passed a



MR DUFF COOPER

"For that principle we must

turning-point in his life. The days of promise and oral unsteadiness are over. No more evolutions are likely. He is steady, sober, responsible, but still brilliant.

Possibly his physique has allowed the impression to be formed that his surface is still callow. Till recently he carried about the look of a young soldier, almost a drummer-boy, who lived to beat the summons to attention, and give the peremptory signal to dress by the right. Perhaps he has had more leisure in his recent retirement, for he is now acquiring the outlines of middle-age and his manner has mellowed with his tongue. The drummer-boy has given place to the comfortable field officer. Henceforth his corporal expansion will neutralize his apparent lack of inches. Gentleness has been busily invading this brisk young spirit. The fact is that he is changing physically and spiritually before the eyes of the men and women among whom he moves. At this very moment his mind is stepping finally out of the lush garden of youth on to the hard high road of responsibility. Given reasonable health Duff Cooper is going to matter considerably in the days to come.

Before he entered Parliament he had behind him Eton, New College, and a very gallant career in the Army as an officer in the Grenadier Guards. When he was admitted to the Distinguished Service Order he really had performed distinguished service. Nobody could truthfully call him a coward or a fool. Fortune united him with a woman of envied and classical loveliness, whose portraits, when she was Lady Diana Manners, had packed the illustrated social weeklies during the war years. For ten years he served in the Foreign Office and so was confirmed in his tilt towards France.

So, aged thirty-four, but looking younger, this Guards officer whose trim, regular features belied a lively intelligence, entered the House in 1924 for the two-member constituency of Oldham. He delivered a maiden speech which was so bright that it impressed those who imagined that in fortunate society there can be found nothing but nit-wits. The *Daily Mail*, which was later to treat him with less respect, published a photograph in which Duff Cooper appeared looking like a military angel. He was on the march. Within four years this model for the Officers' Mess of the Brigade of Guards actually reached the ranks of the Government, for he sufficiently impressed Baldwin for him to make him as early as 1928 Financial Secretary to the War Office.

Oldham was too near the margin to keep him when the Labour tide ran high in 1929. It would have needed a less intellectual—less demonstrably “upper-class”—candidate, a more assiduous cultivator of the wayward affections of the Industrial North to have stood the remotest chance of withstanding the flood. So acceptable, however, was the Duff Cooper of those days to the ruling Tory personalities that he was soon nominated for the romantic division of Winchester. The ex-Minister could confidently expect a serene return to the House at an early General Election. But his victorious re-entry was to be advanced some months by the blundering tactics of Lords Rothermere and Beaverbrook.

At the beginning of 1931 Mr. Baldwin was the subject of a violent man-hunt conducted in the columns of the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Evening Standard*, the *Evening News*, the *Sunday Express* and the

Weekly Dispatch. One or two less prolific publications joined in the chase. Baldwin had incurred the displeasure of the two Press Peers, who considered themselves immensely powerful. Not only was he charged with betraying the British Raj in India—that was Lord Rothermere's special preserve—but he was actively offending Lord Beaverbrook by his passive disregard of the great policy of Empire Free Trade. Through the death of its sitting Member, the St. George's Division of Westminster unexpectedly needed a new representative in March. As a standard-bearer of Free Trade within the Empire Lord Beaverbrook arranged to run one Sir Ernest Petter. This act was a direct challenge to the Conservative leadership in a Conservative stronghold and Baldwin could not but accept it. Duff Cooper, who could be trusted to fight like a cornered cat, was invited to stand as a follower of the official Conservative leader and accepted the invitation. There opened one of the most unpleasant by-elections which has ever blotted even our variegated democratic record. The issue developed as a conflict between the traditional methods of appointing party leaders and the "dictatorship of the Press."

Within a few days, and no doubt to his considerable personal embarrassment, Sir Ernest Petter, an obscure but well-meaning individual, found himself being eulogized by the most drivelling puffs in the Press that was running him. Duff Cooper upon the other hand suffered what he had to expect—every kind of tendentious abuse. But most of the enemy's weapons he found himself able to parry with ease. The campaign against him was conducted amateurishly. Because of his declarations in favour of international co-operation

he was amiably described as a "softy." All that was necessary was for his supporters to re-publish the notice gazetting the award to him of the D.S.O.

Less easy, and possibly less necessary to meet, was the unearthing by a newspaper of an occasion when he had delivered in Germany a lecture entitled "An Apology for the British Empire." The imperialists of St. George's were expected to be ignorant that "apology" properly means a "reasoned explanation" and not a "shamefaced admission of guilt." But possibly the general population did not mind very much in what sense the British Empire had been apologized for. As the campaign was proceeding during the height of the Indian controversy the *Daily Mail* came out with headings and placards "Gandhi is watching St. George's." Sir Ernest Petter's supporters trundled round the constituency a half-naked life-sized effigy of the Indian leader to illustrate this intelligent slogan.

At his meetings in one of the most impersonal constituencies in the country, Duff Cooper discovered an unsuspected flair for invective. When Beaverbrook seemed to be casting doubt upon Duff Cooper's personal courage he retorted by saying in one of his speeches, "Lord Beaverbrook has not got the guts of a louse," a striking and telling phrase to fall from the lips of the future composer of a classic biography of Talleyrand. Thus did he deem himself to be repaying the tormentors of himself and his leader in their own coin. When he spoke his condition seemed substantially more excitable than his hearers'. He would blow himself out like a frog and explode with vehemence before an audience containing a big proportion

of imported hecklers and persons who had come from other parts of London to see and to share the fun. In the front row sat his wife and other celebrated relatives, listening to the man with the sharp pugnacity of a cat and the terrifying expansiveness of a frog who now barked like a hound at an unresponsive audience.

Sense was discernible amid this ranting. When he complained that Lord Beaverbrook was trying to impose a protectionist programme on Baldwin, "This," he shouted with violence where the tone of argument was needed, while he surveyed the back row with a kindling and a roving eye, "is the *very policy* for which Mr. Baldwin was attacked from the same quarter at the General Election of 1923!" He was irascible at question time, like many another harassed candidate. He would mutter to his companions at the table which formed the only trace of a "platform" in the schoolroom, "I can't hear what the fellah is saying," or "What can the fellah mean?" He was not yet steeled enough by electioneering to know that a hot tongue should never be suffered to intrude into a cool head. But he was confident enough of his powers to maintain his extra-political activities. At the time he was broadcasting a series of critical talks on modern literature. He arrived in the studio out of breath and some moments late. He explained his unpunctuality in these rather unconventional words: "Some of you—puff—may know—puff—that I am engaged—puff—in a by-election." No doubt a goodly number of his future constituents were thus reminded of his interest in their welfare.

Baldwin could not and did not desert his young

champion. In his letter of commendation he recalled that Duff Cooper was leaving a safe seat to engage in a very difficult struggle. If Duff Cooper were defeated he himself might have to resign from the Party leadership, so Baldwin stirred himself to what he could always do when he had his back to the wall, namely return the blows of his adversaries with interest. He even equalled and excelled the robust language of the candidate. If it were possible he gave Duff Cooper a lesson in invective. At the celebrated Queen's Hall meeting he accused the Press Peers of wanting "power without responsibility, the prerogative of the harlot through the ages."

The attempt to govern parties and Parliament from Fleet Street was vanquished. Without a good and positive candidate to carry his banner Baldwin might have lost the day, for the figures of the poll were impressive without being overwhelming. The scenes at the declaration at Caxton Hall were in some respects reminiscent of Eatanswill. The crowd was dense and surging, part of it noisy, part of it anxious. A collection of young toughs stood beneath the building chanting this beautiful refrain, "P, E, T, T, E, R! We want Petter!" In the crowd before the main door was a tipsy little clerk who combatively repeated again and again this most pertinent question, "Who is Lord Beaverbrook, anyway?" When the result was announced Lady Diana so far departed from her statuesque dignity as to wave the blue party colours in the ecstasy of her relief. Howls and cheers arose before the victor himself could be heard from an upper window. When he did speak he could say but little and his words surprised those who had been

admiring him in other and more tempestuous moods. "Let there be an end to these unhappy differences. Let us go forward from to-day as an united party." Sir Ernest Petter, if he sought to appear at all, was not visible from the street. In St. George's itself there was revealed a division. Duff Cooper attracted 17,242 votes, but his opponent, by polling 11,532, had surely done well enough to preclude the lament which Lord Beaverbrook's organs next day chanted over his corpse and his cause.

Instead of representing the ancient capital of England Duff Cooper now found himself sitting for a fraction of modern London, situated at the back door of the Houses of Parliament, where the only opposition to official Conservatism which could raise its head was heterodox Toryism. This particular heterodoxy had been blown along by an unsavoury breath and Duff Cooper found himself treated for a time as the living expression of political decency. He had been the centre of a first-class episode. The manner of its development may have prevented a serious deviation from tradition. Later in the year, at the panic election, he enjoyed the luxury of an unopposed return. Four years later he nearly caused the comely Mrs. Anne Fremantle, who was standing as a Socialist, to lose her deposit. In the summer of 1931 all seemed arranged for his steady and uninterrupted progress to the highest places.

He went back to his old post at the War Office of Financial Secretary, but this time he had the chance to shine, for the Secretary of State, Lord Hailsham, was in another place. Upon Duff Cooper there fell the duty on three occasions of presenting the Army

Estimates in the House of Commons. This act he performed with a smooth competence which caused all who witnessed the exhibition, from his fair and famous wife in the gallery to his colleagues beside him, to blink with admiration. Up stood the drummer-boy and delivered without a note an elaborate statement on a complete Department of State. His achievement was so unusual that Members and journalists alike were inclined to say, "How does he do it?" The only evidence that he was making any special calls on his memory was a characteristic jerk of the chin as though he was throwing his mind back to the moment of preparation. In his opening statement he spoke calmly, as was fitting. But when he had to debate and answer the ingenious criticisms of an Opposition which could find little to oppose, the old fury sprang into flame. Once, in answering the late Mr. Morgan Jones, he rapped out, "In regarding war as the greatest calamity that can overtake mankind I claim to be as good a pacifist as he!" But what is a pacifist? And how can a man make himself a "good" one? His words seemed to have plenty of meaning for himself. For his eyes flashed and he seemed about to boil and burst.

In midsummer 1934 he advanced a stage to be Financial Secretary to the Treasury. This move brought him into intimate contact with the man for whose judgment on matters even more important than finance he was to conceive a disdain. But, as far as can be ascertained, for this period he worked harmoniously with Neville Chamberlain. Perhaps he was mildly amused if he saw his chief casting an appraising eye abroad upon the worsening scene. Neither could

have foreseen the frightful climax, the personal triumph of the one and the historic vindication of the other.

After the Election of 1935 Baldwin brought the man to whom he owed so much into the Executive. Duff Cooper became Secretary of State for War. It was the moment of Mussolini's aggression upon Ethiopia. Duff Cooper, a believer in an international order, who saw the security of the British Empire gravely jeopardized by unchecked aggression in any quarter, spoke out at the very first Cabinet he attended in favour of the strongest possible measures against Italy. He had a record of war service and of him it could not be said that he was willing and anxious to fight to the last drop of the blood of other men. He must have foreseen with the clearest sight the precipitous course to which affairs were now drifting. For he took upon himself the business of playing the alarmist when he was unable, because of his ministerial rank, to define the cause of the alarm.

Once, when appealing for recruits, he said it was his duty "to frighten people out of their skins." To some his language seemed mere panic-mongering sadism. He incurred plenty of devout reprobation by attacking pacifist bishops. The way his mind was working could be inferred from a speech he made in Paris stressing the unity of interest between Britain and France and the reality of their "alliance." He had to try to indicate the dangerous and delusive depths by pointing to the roadstead. But for this speech the Liberal and Labour parties roasted him in the House. Were we returning to the Balance of Power? The offender sat on the Front Bench

in angry silence while his conduct was subjected to a searching and a hostile analysis. So cruel are the restraints placed on the tongues of Ministers, and of all men Duff Cooper must suffer most when he cannot speak out. The debate was distinguished by an intervention by Winston Churchill, who liked Duff Cooper and what he had said. No doubt the Minister was grateful for what the great private Member tried to do for him.

When Chamberlain succeeded Baldwin he transferred the War Secretary to the Admiralty. Duff Cooper moved capably through his new and august environment. When he severed himself from office sixteen months later the slanderous whisper crept around that the move was a good riddance, that he had not been an efficient First Lord. This rumour was as inaccurate as it was artificial and unchivalrous. He was one of the best Departmental Ministers. He has grasp, application and the faculty for harmonious relations with his staff. This is not the precise point at which to assess his judgment over Munich. But his departure meant for the Government a diminution of their total administrative ability.

Resignations seldom come about on the initiative of the retiring Minister for some isolated dramatic reason. Duff Cooper, one may safely conclude, like Eden before him, endured to the limit the pursuit of a policy for which his distrust grew daily. Indeed if you read his speech of resignation you will see how near he came to lingering on a little longer. It was only the difference between Munich and Berchtesgaden which finally brought him to the point of what was for himself a momentous decision. Here is how he des-

cribed the conflict that kept rolling on in his mind: "The Prime Minister will shortly be explaining to this House the particulars in which the Munich terms differ from the Godesberg ultimatum. There are great and important differences and it is a great triumph for the Prime Minister that he was able to acquire them. I spent the greater part of Friday (30th September) trying to persuade myself that those terms were good enough for me. I tried to swallow them—I did not want to do what I have done—but they stuck in my throat because . . . there still remained the fact that Czechoslovakia was to be invaded, and I thought that after accepting the humiliation of partition she should have been spared the ignominy and the horror of invasion."

Perhaps the enforced swallowing of other incidents had already given him a pain in the throat. He can hardly have enjoyed the experience of having to defend the inactivity of British sailors as they witnessed from their warships the cries and struggles of the drowning in Spanish territorial waters. Any other course, he had had to argue, would have meant a departure from "our great policy of non-intervention." If we had intervened to save the wretches within sight of the shore of the Basque country should we not have been called upon to take refugees from the beach? And when our rescue party had gone so far what was to prevent them from carrying their humane expedition inland, and so on as far as Madrid? Duff Cooper was annoyed, and perhaps grieved and alarmed by the victory of the dictators in Spain, and the argumentative achievement just adumbrated could hardly have been to his stomach.

On Munich he went, a more dramatic moment than that chosen by his friend Anthony Eden for his own exit. His "personal statement" on his resignation was a model for this important and lugubrious type of speech. It was, moreover, delivered at a pivotal tactical moment, on Monday, 3rd October. The Wednesday before the Prime Minister had been the centre of a scene which to-day seems to constitute the zenith of frustrated hopes. He had had his exuberant commission to go to Munich and felt that he must bring back some kind of peace. He came back amid the wildly renewed cheering of that part of the public who imagined that terms did not matter beside that chance of living which they thought to be threatened. The solitary discordant public note was struck on the Saturday by Duff Cooper, when he resigned. The note was in fact a prophetic knell of danger—and perhaps death—ahead. Duff Cooper was the pioneer along the nation's way back from hysteria to reason. With the news of his sacrifice of office people were obliged to allow thought to stand up to sentiment.

But in the House most of his party were anxious to celebrate the alleged triumph of their leader. They were impatient to start the cheering. But there was Duff Cooper with the right, as a retiring Minister, to make the first speech before the start of the Debate proper. Nineteen men out of twenty would have fallen short of their opportunity. They would have erred on the side of recrimination, clap-trap or self-pity. Duff Cooper, notwithstanding the high standard of speaking that he had set himself, avoided all these extremes and quietly but firmly began the torpedo attack on the Chamberlain armada. He was not put off when the

Chamberlainites—a huge majority that day—rudely cheered his remark that he was aware he was standing between the House and the Prime Minister, but proceeded to deliver a perfect exposure of the flaws of Munich.

His manner was as impressive as his matter. Gone was the faintest trace of his earlier trick of ranting. He contrived to appear tired, sad, and careworn. There was no immoderate emphasis, no stormy bulging of the cheeks in any frenzy of self-justification, no raising of the voice in roars and screams. He spoke as spontaneously as he had ever done. Only once in that forty minutes of acute trial did he falter and then from his waistcoat pocket he drew a piece of paper which, unfolded, could not have exceeded nine square inches. He caught up the thread, back went the "notes," and on went Duff Cooper.

The language he used was simple and well suited to a human theme. He described his sense of loneliness. "When in the Cabinet room all his other colleagues were able to present him with bouquets, and it was an extremely painful and bitter moment for me that all I could offer the Prime Minister was my resignation." We should, he contended, always make plain exactly where we stood in an international crisis. In 1914 the Berlin crowd had smashed all the windows of the British Embassy. The members of the Staff had had great sympathy with them, for their Government had assured them that we should remain neutral. So now during the summer Hitler had been constantly reassured that Britain would not fight. When Duff Cooper had returned from travelling in Scandinavia and the Baltic States at the end of

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August it was clear that Germany could only be prevented from going to war at the end of September by Great Britain stating that she would be in that war and on the other side.

After the rape of Austria he said he had urged a firm declaration, but he had been met with the retort that the British were not prepared to fight for Czechoslovakia. But we should have been fighting as in 1914 "in order that one great Power should not be allowed, in disregard of treaty obligations, of the laws of nations, and the decrees of morality, to dominate by brutal force the continent of Europe. For that principle we fought against Napoleon Buonaparte, and against Louis XIV of France and Philip II of Spain. For that principle we must ever be prepared to fight, for on the day when we are not prepared to fight for it we forfeit our Empire, our liberties and our independence." The guarded statements made by the Prime Minister and repeated by Simon were not the language which the dictators understood. They had introduced a new vocabulary, and talked the new language of the headlines of the tabloid Press. We were always told we must not irritate Hitler. "It seems to me that Herr Hitler never makes a speech save under the influence of considerable irritation, and the addition of one more irritant would not, I should have thought, have made a great difference."

The Prime Minister lost several opportunities of making the position plain to Hitler. He made his last appeal on the morning of Wednesday, 28th September. For the first time Hitler was prepared to yield an inch. "But I would remind the House," said the former First Lord with rising drama, "that the message from

the Prime Minister was not the first news that he had received that morning. At dawn he had learned of the mobilization of the British Fleet!" Duff Cooper claimed that he had long been urging this mobilization. It was the only language to which Hitler would pay attention—the language of the mailed fist. He described the headlong deterioration during the time that Chamberlain had tried to move Hitler by the language of sweet reasonableness. And after all Czechoslovakia was to be invaded. "The German Government, having got their man down, were not to be deprived of the pleasure of kicking him . . . and the army was not to be robbed of its loot." He criticized the joint declaration by Chamberlain and Hitler and then turned his attention to the new commitment we had undertaken of guaranteeing the residue of Czechoslovakia. "We have taken away the defences of Czechoslovakia in the same breath as we have guaranteed them, as though you were to deal a man a mortal blow and at the same time insure his life."

This new guarantee should mean a great acceleration of British rearmament. We needed an army on a continental basis. But how could we justify that extra burden to the people if, in the view of the Prime Minister, Munich meant "peace in our time"? The Prime Minister believed Hitler although he had broken the long series of engagements which Duff Cooper enumerated. The Prime Minister believed that Hitler was interested only in Germany. "Well, there are Germans in other countries—in Switzerland, in Denmark and in Alsace; I think that one of the only countries in Europe in which there are no

Germans is Spain, and yet there are rumours that Germany has taken an interest in that country!" Finally, as to colonies, about which Hitler had said there was no question of war; did that mean that Hitler would take "No" for an answer? Or did he believe that he would secure them "without fighting, by well-timed bluff, bluster and blackmail"?

There was more in this speech of a personal character. It might have been improved if he had refrained from apprehending the ruin of his own political career. If he incurred this disaster he might perhaps be compensated by the reflection that he had secured his place in history. For daring, for presentation, for accuracy of prognosis, this speech could not have been surpassed. If ever a man is entitled to say in public, "I told you so," that man is Duff Cooper. But outspoken as he is, his manners would never allow him so to debase Eton, Oxford and the Guards. When Mr. Chamberlain spoke immediately afterwards he made no attempt to traverse what Duff Cooper had said. He expressed the desire to make the speech he would have made if the First Lord had not resigned!

These excerpts from Duff Cooper's speech have been given because they proclaim the man as he now is after many years of half-maturity. If I could be sure of persuading the reader to study to-day in Hansard this speech made in the autumn of 1938 I should feel well content. The speaker is a rare type who could hardly have been nurtured outside England. In middle-age he is intellectually as brave as, when a young man, he was physically fearless. He is forthright, determined and slightly too cocksure. He is liberal in the sense in which all educated Englishmen

are liberal. He is conservative in the sense of desiring the lasting security of the British Empire. He believes in toleration, democracy and liberty of opinion. But his ordinary conduct is not "democratic" as the word is commonly understood. He is too intellectual to be the ready companion of every chance individual. Indeed most men would call him "high-brow." His society is for ordinary men an alarming and not an inspiring experience. Read his *Talleyrand* and you will feel yourself in the company of a professor of history with a deft literary touch and a natural revulsion from the threadbare phrase. It may not be easy reading but it is an undeniably distinguished piece of literature. The fact that it calls for concentration should not, even in 1939, condemn it.

But his style is flexible. Since leaving office he has been writing articles of great directness and punch, exhibiting the power of saying succinctly and in graphic homely phrases what millions of his fellow countrymen wish they had the power to express. That faculty is said to be a kind of poetry and it has a wider, if more ephemeral, circulation than the metrical variety. If Duff Cooper could be separated from his record and from his rebellion against the dominant figure of Neville Chamberlain, a poll on the propositions he has set out in the *Evening Standard* would yield, I believe, an overwhelming affirmative vote. Let us hope that an incidental advantage is to compensate him for the loss of Admiralty House and a First Lord's salary.

He should be careful not to dissipate his debating energies. To-day the question of contributory pensions for Members of Parliament is hardly a matter which need engage the attention of a man of his prestige.

This interest in lesser matters was more appropriate before he held any high office. Years ago, when the House was discussing the fate of Waterloo Bridge and the matter was left to a free vote, there was the diverting spectacle of Duff Cooper advancing from the Front Bench pleas for preservation against Mr. J. H. Thomas's arguments for demolition. As might be expected, Duff Cooper took the aesthetic line. Why, he asked, destroy this historic monument when it may well be that to the Englishman abroad his chief memory of home is the river-front containing Waterloo Bridge, Somerset House, the Embankment and Westminster?

That was long ago, and to-day he might reasonably be asked to save his efforts for the Navy, the Army and the Nazi danger. He did not take a long rest after Munich. When the House was discussing the financial advance to Czechoslovakia he said it was a sad day for the House of Commons and the sooner it was over the better. His most famous attack of vehemence occurred during the debate on the 1939 Naval Estimates on the morrow of the Ides of March. He answered Mr. Churchill's objection to the proposal to scrap battleships three years from that date. "Something will happen. A great deal must happen before the year 1942. *Either a fearful disaster will have befallen the world, or we shall have moved into a happier period. Either the all for which we have striven for so long will have been lost and peace will have disappeared from the world, or else peace will be better assured than it is to-day. One thing is absolutely certain. This period of tension and anxiety cannot continue.*"

He proceeded to criticize the Anglo-German Naval Treaty. When we had a curvilinear coast line to defend and needed also to be ready to send a fleet to South Africa, the Indian Ocean, the Far East and the West Indies, the ratio of 100 to 35 ceased to be very impressive. A Member on the Government side interrupted to ask what terms more favourable to ourselves would Germany have been likely to accept. Duff Cooper retorted that our allowing Germany to have a navy at all was an act of generosity on our part of which she had gradually taken advantage. He went on, "Whether it is a great advantage to have a treaty with Germany of any kind I am extremely doubtful, and I have always been. Indeed, I consider any agreement that Hitler signs is not worth the paper it is written on, while *that thrice-perjured traitor and breaker of oaths is at the head of the German State.*"

As the Munich agreement had the day before been torn to shreds nobody protested—either in England or in Germany. On 28th April Hitler actually denounced the Anglo-German Naval Treaty. Once again Duff Cooper was fully vindicated in a period shorter than he himself could have foreseen. He is one of the very few speakers to whom Winston Churchill makes a point of listening. The reason must be two-fold—sense and style. Nobody could deny the first quality to him in the harsh light of events. As to the second, Duff Cooper is equipped with one thing which is denied to Churchill: he can rehearse a theme of complex gravity without the anchor of a manuscript. He is a throw-back to the more combative age of controversy in which Churchill is rooted. His posture and gestures are martial.

As he speaks he tosses back his head like a high-mettled charger. That is the kind of personality to appeal to a descendant of Marlborough.

After the war, whose shadows we have, as Duff Cooper predicted, just entered, the old forms of government may or may not survive. If during the calamity they do live on in some form, however unlike their pre-war shape, Duff Cooper should undoubtedly be required to administer some Department. He has vigour and a clear-sighted patriotism. He could summarize the cause which has driven us to arms in lucid and inspiring language. Where he may fail is in the limited personal appeal he can make. He is not a man to mingle with the mob. He could not endure to drink with vulgarians, or swap silly stories with fools. These defects carry qualities which fully counterbalance them. He has a spirit above the lower manifestations of ambition. His first ambition is to deal honourably with his own conscience and to obey the guidance of his own intelligence. If the fulfilment of one's main ambition is a ground for satisfaction, Duff Cooper should be a happy man.

elementary rules of constitutional practice. It has been done in order that we may estimate the chance of Mr. Attlee's becoming Prime Minister. First, he has to remain leader of the Labour Party, a position he could lose by resignation or failure to secure re-election by his own associates. Then he has to lead his Party so successfully at an election that afterwards they are either an absolute majority of the House of Commons or form the largest single party. Neither possibility is certain of accomplishment. If he successfully fulfils the first condition there is the second—still greater—obstacle to surmount. Let us therefore first ask, does "Clem" Attlee stand out as the inevitable Labour Leader? Is he without any considerable rival? Is he head and shoulders above any of his followers?

To all these questions the answer must be a dim but deliberate "No," as emphatic as a foghorn in the mists of the Atlantic. The whole future of the Labour Party is shrouded in the vapours of gloom. But for the present Clem Attlee is at the helm. What manner of man is this whom the crew have elected to navigate the vessel and to direct the campaign?

The fact that he is extremely unimpressive need neither elate nor depress. There is, it is true, nothing specially creditable in a party which cannot cast up a striking figure to man the bridge. On the other hand men of apparently second-rate endowments have managed satisfactorily when they have been vested with great responsibility. But does Mr. Attlee speak with the authentic voice of Labour? Before we answer we must arrive more exactly at the meaning of that high-sounding phrase.



So much radical legislation has been passed during the last half-dozen years that to many the distinction between the Right and Left of English politics has been so far obscured as now to amount to no more than a difference of tempo. "In time," some say, "circumstances will give us the greatest possible degree of State ownership and State control. Under Socialist governments it would come in thirty years, under the Conservatives in fifty." The Conservatives are said to be driving a machine of "delicate mechanism" at a snail's pace so that they will neither imperil the works nor disturb the comfort of the passengers in the best seats. The Socialists claim that they can speed up the whole pantechicon for the benefit of all who are going for the ride, and that their superior mechanical skill will enable them to carry out any necessary running repairs while the excursion is racing along at full speed.

Colour can be lent to this theory by the manner in which a Government of the Right pushes through revolutionary legislation despite the vows of undying resistance sworn by many of its most esteemed supporters. Inevitability bears down their opposition. Sooner or later the milestones will be passed. It is the business of the Labour leader to inspire a majority with an earnest desire to reach them with all possible speed.

There is similarly a difference—a difference mainly of emphasis—in matters of Foreign Policy. The comfortable theory of isolation seems finally to have faded into discredit. What now divides Left and Right is the extent to which this country shall be automatically committed to the defence of the independence of

other countries. All parties, except the complete pacifists, have accepted the unprecedented number of guarantees which we have now given to France, Belgium, Poland, Rumania, Greece and Turkey. If one is threatened our interest is at once engaged. The one conscientious objector in a hundred raises his lonely voice in protest at a policy which a year ago seemed inconceivable. The question now arises—is there to be a limit to this mountain of commitments? We may be pretty certain that caution will determine the Conservative view. “Let us include in any new engagement a condition for consultation before action. How can we be certain of the discretion of every one of our countless new associates?” The Labour attitude would probably be that the more automatic the guarantee of action the greater will be the deterrent upon the aggressor. Anything short of an unqualified undertaking that rules out consultative preliminaries will encourage any pusillanimous British Government to try to stem the tide by talk. This known hiatus between the crime and its visitation will incite the criminal.

But there is always the convenient cry which will go on echoing through our affairs from the days of isolation—“Why should we spill the blood of our boys in defence of Ruritania?” If any one thinks that kind of plea is for ever silent he is deceived. It is still the task of the Labour leader to convince the public of the paradox that the safer course will be to take the bigger risk.

For these enterprises he needs to be a man of powerful and buoyant personality. He should moreover himself have had personal experience of Labour

problems. If he cannot be a member of a Trade Union at least let him have intimate personal relations with innumerable Trade Unionists. And this generosity should extend still further. He must appear to be a leader of the nation, and our nation is still in the grip of the industrial system. So he must avoid charging responsible industrialists with personal unworthiness of motive. And as he respects their honourable intentions so will he attract from that able section of society sympathy with his own party's programme. All this he will have to achieve without incurring a scintilla of suspicion that he is betraying the interests of his party, which, whether or not they like the designation, is the greatest "class party" in our political history.

How nearly does Mr. Attlee approach to these superlative qualities? Has he so magnetic a personality that men and women will work themselves to a shadow in the cause of which he should be the embodiment? I am sorry to say that the mere idea is laughable. He is like a point, which has position and no magnitude. Great party leaders have had their names in adjectival form added to the English language—Cromwellian, Palmerstonian, Disraelian, Gladstonian, Asquithian, and even Baldwinian. Lloyd Georgian is preferred to Lloyd Georgic and Churchillian is already with us. But who has tried to coin an adjective from Attlee? Could it perhaps be Attleenian?

Before presuming further to pronounce on the finished man who is Leader of the Opposition let us recall his background. It is what many of the more pugnacious class warriors behind him would call "bourgeois." But that is no reason to condemn it.

An education at a public school of passable renown was followed by residence at University College, Oxford. So occupied he carried a nimble waspish brain into the early years of the twentieth century. He must have read attentively, for his speaking and writing reveal a well-stored mind. He was called to the Bar, but any professional achievements are less well remembered than his social service in the East End of London.

I should imagine that it was during this period that Clement Attlee had his hatred of exaggerated social inequalities confirmed. You can enjoy an unusual view of your fellow beings from Toynbee Hall, of which he was Secretary at the age of twenty-seven. Here, on the fringes of the City, you can see the contacts of great wealth with extreme poverty. Attlee, a most intelligent man, must have been impressed with the simple truth that wealth cannot arrogate a monopoly of brains. He would certainly rate intelligence high among the human qualities, higher, in all probability, than courage or generosity.

The war came and he was soon in the early thirties to be crawling gallantly over the savage slopes of Gallipoli. After an interlude in Mesopotamia he reached the still grimmer and gloomier battlefields of France. In one of his speeches in the House on the Disarmament Conference he was attacking the practice of having "experts" to deal with various classes of destructive weapons. He said he would choose as an "expert" on gas a man who had suffered from it. A military member interrupted, "The experts went through the Somme!" Attlee could have retorted that he knew war at first hand as well as any pro-

fessional soldier, but some gentlemanly inhibition stopped him. By the end of the War he was a major. But even war could not stultify him, and he was wise enough to take an interest in the science of warfare which was not wasted when he later served at the War Office as Under-Secretary of State in MacDonald's first Labour Government. He has the wit to enjoy the theory, though not the practice of war. That did not prevent his comrades in arms regarding him as an excellent and a gallant soldier.

After being Mayor of Stepney in 1919 Attlee became Member for the Limehouse Division in 1922. When MacDonald formed his first ministry he made him lieutenant to the diminutive War Secretary Stephen Walsh. After the Red Letter Election of 1924 he did not exist for four years and a half as a mere cipher in the Opposition. He was nominated as a Member of the Indian Statutory Commission in 1927. This work took him to India under the chairmanship of Simon whom he was now able to contemplate at close range in the closest contact. Attlee has a witty mind and Simon's foibles must have given him endless amusement, whether they were due to his vanity or to any other weakness.

When this work was over Attlee's return to the more normal Parliamentary routine happily coincided with Sir Oswald Mosley's resignation from the Government. MacDonald chose as his new Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster an easier colleague in the person of Attlee. When the crash came in August 1931 he was serving as Postmaster-General.

He had had comfortable support from the electors of Limehouse till the panic election of 1931. This time

he got back by hundreds only. By 1935 his majority had recovered its normal proportions. But it was his lucky survival in 1931 which made him. He had to act as George Lansbury's deputy-leader of the Opposition. When, just before the 1935 election, the question of sanctions skimmed off Lansbury as well as Cripps, Attlee suddenly found himself leading the Labour Party during the campaign. The Socialists came back to the House of Commons with many of the old brigade restored to them. Not only was there now the festive West Riding figure of Arthur Greenwood, who had returned at a by-election in the spring of 1932, but there was also a king among Cockneys, Herbert Morrison, of whose peculiarly apt Parliamentary capacity more must be said directly. Between these three men lay the issue of leadership. The Parliamentary Labour Party first eliminated Morrison and went on to confirm Attlee in his position.

Unconsciously his followers were making him a present financially well worth having. Rather less than two years later a Statute known as the "Ministers of the Crown Act" enacted among many other provisions that whoever was leader of the Opposition was thenceforward to be paid a salary of £2,000 a year. There was much that could be said in favour of this. The leader of His Majesty's Opposition, ran part of one argument, is an important and a necessary element in our Constitution. Lack of funds should not embarrass a good man who is the alternative Prime Minister and as such has rather more expense inseparable from his position.

On the other hand plenty of nasty things could be and were said. No leader of the Opposition

had in fact very many necessary expenses in excess of an ordinary private Member. By taking this money from his opponents he was becoming their prisoner! No wonder Attlee was so meek and submissive! For gratuitous offensiveness this argument would take a great deal of beating. It was as though Attlee was to be paid, not by the State, but out of Conservative Party funds, subscribed in part by brewers, and as though the additional £200 a year now being paid to all Members of Parliament whether Independent, Government supporters, or Members of the Opposition, flowed from a like unsavoury spring. Ingenuity will stop nowhere in its search for injurious slanders. The worst that can now be said is that the job of Leader of the Opposition is "worth having," both for immediate material advantage and because of prospective distinction and profit.

The complaint that he is a tame creature of his opponents is not a well-founded one. When he is in form Attlee can be magnificently offensive. He can buzz and sting with the best of wasps. But there is about his assaults something that is too carefully elaborated, almost too literary. Pamphleteering is prolific on the Left, while the Right hardly bothers to fill its fountain-pen. Attlee has done his share of Socialist writing with a certain acid vigour. And his industrious pen can be clearly observed behind his speeches. The abiding impression he leaves is of someone conscientiously reproducing the epigrams, the sarcasms and the eloquence that he has worked out at his desk.

He stands at the Opposition box, a thin figure, nervous and highly strung, with a manuscript held in

one hand that shakes, not with fright—for he is no coward in any sense—but with nerves. He is “thin” all through, except in argument. His voice is thin like his personality. As his irritation or contempt waxes he finds it ever harder to look the House of Commons between the eyes. Perchance he is continuously suggesting to himself the answers to his own arguments, and few states of mind can be less comfortable. He is primarily an educated and fastidious intelligence, a competent administrator, a clever critic. Secondarily he is a leader. And that is just where he falls short of what is needed of him.

When Attlee is called upon to make a speech on some occasion that forbids controversy, such as the death of a statesman or of a foreign monarch, he can do this duty as well as anybody and better than most. He understands, respects and enjoys the House of Commons. Unlike some rigid partisans he knows that most Englishmen are just as capable of unity as of dissension. And when he is uttering the acceptable he is happy. When he makes ready an attack he is too clearly anxious for success. It is said of him that when he converses, as he is reputed to be able to do in a highly entertaining fashion, he nearly gasps with anxiety that the points of his jests shall be thoroughly apprehended. He may be painfully aware that few men are as quick-witted as he. But he will not recede from a stand or modify a criticism. Intellectually he is completely honest. He is no trimmer. He has been one of the main personal obstacles to a “Left Centre” coalition of Liberals, Socialists and Edenite Conservatives. He may well reflect that it has been none too easy to preserve any core of unity in a party that,

besides himself and his orthodox colleagues, has tried to contain as some of its brightest luminaries Snowden, MacDonald, J. H. Thomas, Cripps and Lansbury. And how much more improbable would be the faintest note of harmony in the heterogeneous choir that would glorify the "Left Centre."

He is a generous opponent where he feels that generosity is honest. He will not hesitate privately and publicly to pay tributes to the intelligence and integrity of others, but never pays compliments where they are not due. That is a rare quality among politicians. One of the complaints which his more restive followers have uttered is that his leadership has not been sufficiently "energetic," by which they are presumed to mean "not violent enough." Only rarely does he respond by unfairness, into which he may well be thrust, half by accident, from behind.

Once he allowed himself, in the heat generated beside and behind him, to make in a single sentence a disastrous mistake. Hoare had, just after the 1935 election, resigned in tears. Baldwin and the rest, after first ratifying the Laval-Hoare proposals and then repudiating them, had stayed on. Attlee was discharging his duty of attack. In theory it should have been almost childishly easy. Never had a Government seemed more vulnerable or a policy less excusable. How did he use the opportunity? Did he keep the whole controversy exclusively on the elevated planes of national honour and international right? He did not. "There is the question," he said, "of the honour of the Prime Minister." Later on Austen Chamberlain, as the elder statesman who volunteered to captain the lifeboat, turned this isolated remark into

a lifebuoy for Baldwin's tormented convulsions in the deep waters. "The leader of the Opposition," he said, "by pointing to the Prime Minister and saying that his honour is at stake has made it certain that no Government supporter will abstain in the division." Austen's prediction was as correct as Attlee's tactics were unfortunate.

This kind of mistake can only spring from a modest refusal to rely on his own considerable intellectual resources. For he has a manifest admiration for Baldwin. Indeed he has almost seemed from time to time to fall beneath the unaccountable spell that he is able to cast around him. He had many of the things which Attlee shares, literary appreciation, a knowledge of what is good English, a contempt for artificial barriers of class—and many of the things besides which Attlee emulates but perhaps has not achieved, the power of speaking for England and a real understanding of the working men whom Attlee aspires to lead. Baldwin was to a far greater extent than Attlee a leader of the working classes. Often during the last fifteen years, whether they were being led by MacDonald, or Lansbury, or Attlee, Labour Members have been known to sigh "Those Tories are lucky to be led by old Baldwin! It would be grand if we could be behind him."

Attlee falls short of the ideal because he neither understands nor reproduces the real spirit of Labour—not even where it is identical with covetousness. He rightly admires the team that ought to be admiring him. He knows that, however difficult they may be and however severe the party discipline which is necessary to control them, most of the

ageing Labour Members are in the House thanks to their personal qualities, their courage amid a valley crammed with natural obstacles, their resolve to "be somebody" and "get somewhere."

When he looks across the floor at the men who have enjoyed equal or greater advantages of fortune than himself he may try in vain to admire a different sort of manhood. But duty carries him forward, a lean Lenin in a non-revolutionary community, temperate of spirit, vitriolic of tongue, enjoying neither the taunts he has to utter nor the sneers that they evoke. None the less he applies himself always with industry and generally with good humour to a task for which Nature has failed properly to equip him. So if any man deserves a political Victoria Cross he is Mr. (formerly Major) Attlee.

When illness or conflicting engagements take him away from the House his work is done by the Right Honourable Arthur Greenwood. You would have to look far for a more striking contrast in any two men whose life makes them work in double harness. Whereas Attlee never hides his academic background, is painstaking, fastidious, and nearly ascetic, Greenwood is provincial, spontaneous, and excessively democratic, taking care to enjoy life as thoroughly as circumstances will permit. He is a child of the West Riding of Yorkshire and makes no sort of effort at the concealment of his origin. In whatever mood he may be speaking, every syllable of all the words he utters is delivered with the heavy emphasis that resounds through the streets of Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford. In that part of the country they are said to pride

themselves on their bluntness of speech. They have no use for flattery or soft soap. The highest praise is a reluctant "You did very well."

To the more articulate and more effusive Southerner this behaviour appears to be rudeness. The Yorkshireman retaliates by charging the other with insincerity. Arthur Greenwood has carried his outspokenness with him into politics. He is an inveterate wielder of the bludgeon. To him that is the natural weapon. But to brandish it without respite is not necessarily to command the admiration of the House of Commons, which likes to be flattered by occasional displays of dialectical delicacy. That may be one of the reasons why Greenwood's enjoyment of the House is not unqualified. He prefers to administer from an office desk or to share with someone the bluff cut and thrust of direct conversation.

The most abiding impression he leaves is of a man laying about him in a manner which Neville Chamberlain once described with rare felicity as "rumbustious." He stands with a hectic flush upon his features pouring out a torrent of apparently spontaneous abuse. Although he wears powerful glasses they do not conceal the expression of indignant surprise with which he contemplates the latest misdeed of the Government (nearly pronounced "Goov-ern-ment"). Anon the wondering gaze changes into a look of schoolmasterish severity as he frowns out his severe disapproval. He swallows his wrath, purses his lips, and his demeanour has once more changed back from savage jaguar to interrogating secretary-bird.

It is the fashion—or was, till continued leadership in Attlee's absence produced a sudden moderation of



MR ARTHUR GREENWOOD

*"We on these benches
shall not complain."*

manner—for his Labour colleagues to regard him as one who has allowed a good mind to go to pieces through lack of intellectual self-discipline. That his intelligence caught the eye of authority is proved through his selection by Ramsay MacDonald to be Minister of Health in 1929.

He managed to incur more hostility inside and outside Parliament in that ill-fated Administration than most of his comrades in distress. As Minister of Health he was, with Miss Bondfield, the Minister of Labour, the target of extreme left-wing criticism incurred by the Anomalies Act and one of the main objects of Conservative attacks for the mounting insolvency of the Unemployment Fund. He was flailed from either side. When he declined to follow Ramsay MacDonald the Tory antagonism was complete. To many his subsequent defeat at what had long been the unchallengeable Labour seat of Nelson and Colne was matter for jubilation. This emotion, like many others which stir political circles, had little rational excuse. He had in fact carried a Housing Act which failed to produce an immediate flow of new houses, but provided machinery for the later offensive against the slums set in motion by the National Administration.

He came back quite soon but under a cloud and without any great enthusiasm among his own party. When he narrowly recaptured the seat of Wakefield in the spring of 1932 George Lansbury was moved to describe this joyous victory as "lovely." His resumption of actual battle in the House was not an auspicious experience for himself or for any admirers who were left to him. The National Government had been

adamant in their resistance to pleas for the reduction of the Beer Tax. The Socialists of Wakefield exploited the consequent unpopularity of the Government to such effect that they contrived to convert a Government majority of 4,000 into a Labour majority of 300. Greenwood's first Parliamentary job was to wind up a debate for the Opposition. He delivered on the broadest front a denunciation of the works of the National Government monotonously indicating the ebbing popular faith by references to the "Wakefield by-election." When this triumphal phrase had been several times repeated a bright Tory interjected "You swam in on beer!"—an interruption whose quality was worthy of the celebrated Mr. Jack Jones.

This sort of gibe did not prevent him from doing his job with a kind of boyish and buoyant diligence. Somehow he went on for years producing results which were widely criticized as unworthy of his good equipment. With a little more serious effort, men said, he would lift himself into the front rank. Yet in spite of frivolities unusual in a man in the middle fifties he was a serious candidate for Labour leadership in the new Parliament. To-day men are saying different things about him. Has the increasing responsibility of deputy-leadership, they ask, with the chance of the Premiership daily approaching the boundaries of the possible, simultaneously mellowed and steadied this free-tongued former Minister of Health? Nobody can be quite certain, but the perpetual confidences of which he is now the trustee would inevitably have that effect on most men. When the King returned from Canada, Attlee was absent through illness; in the House Greenwood made a speech supporting the

address of welcome which Attlee himself could not have bettered. And somehow there seemed something more fully representative of loyal Labour as the graceful eulogy was uttered in the tones of the West Riding. "How well Greenwood does this sort of thing!" was the comment of some Conservatives, for he had already begun to win in these circles a reputation for sober statesmanship.

When Chamberlain reversed the nation's policy by going back, as Labour would insist, to the policy of collective peace, Greenwood, by forswearing the easier "I told you so" technique, earned admiration among those who fear criticism and at the same time gave ground for some misgiving to those of his supporters who say "Oppose, oppose, oppose!" Two sentences in particular caused these contrary reactions. "If the Prime Minister succeeds, he will wear the laurels of victory on his brow. We on these benches shall not complain." The Tories reflected "How wise! How generous! How statesmanlike!" The Socialists whispered "Is Arthur trying to play the great national statesman? Is this the stealthy opening of the door to a fresh schism and another coalition?" As Greenwood sat down the applause was not of that ecstatic sort which acclaims the end of a full-blooded party attack. The Prime Minister, who followed, complimented him for amply fulfilling his promise to carry on the debate on a high level.

Although he has had the career rather of the civil servant than of the politician there is much about Arthur Greenwood which qualifies him for success in the House. He bears no grudges, he is a ready and an accurate manipulator of other people's Christian

names. In his election campaigns he avoids all semblance of personalities. He has a happy married life and electorally Mrs. Greenwood's personality must be worth hundreds of votes. His native territory regards him as a man who matters, for the City of Leeds made him an Honorary Freeman in 1930 while he was at the Ministry of Health.

Possessed of these advantages he might go any distance. He is held back by an intermittent inability to treat life and the great affairs with which it is laden as anything more solemn than a joyous jamboree. The most serious occasion to which duty might call him might be entered in a mood of irrelevant sky-larking. And Labour does not wish to see its sacred cause covered with unsought ridicule. But at last his sleek golden hair is turning white as his sixtieth year is now not far ahead. Perhaps Time will insist on dragging out the statesman to supersede the hilarious politician.

One cannot imagine Arthur Greenwood keeping his features set in a stern expression long enough for him to admonish or advise upon deportment recruits to the Parliamentary Labour Party. This task was undertaken by Mr. Herbert Morrison at the beginning of the 1935 Parliament in a document which warned the unwary against temptations to waste time and live socially at Westminster. His experience of the House of Commons is only seven years in all; for although he was first elected for South Hackney in 1923 he was defeated in 1924 and 1931. So since first tasting the atmosphere of Parliament he has missed eight years and a half of exhilarating opposition.



MR HERBERT MORRISON

Indeed it was not till 1935 that he learned what it feels like to be able to criticize without restraint. Yet he has managed to acquire the reputation of being the best Parliamentarian in his Party.

"Managed" is used, not because glib speech is in any way foreign to his nature, but because he has overcome one or two daunting physical disabilities. His public may not know that he is sighted only in one eye. But he can turn even this defect to advantage. One feels one is joining him in a piece of documentary research as he bends over his notes and peers at his manuscript with his head and glasses held at a crooked angle. But the business is not being done for effect: only thus can he find his way down the paper before him. And as he hurries along corridors with great heavy strides his body shows itself to be less symmetrical than serviceable. Yet again this curiosity attracts rather than repels. The impression is that of a jaunty and good-natured personality who would be bored by inactivity but is happy indeed if there are plenty of problems to solve and obstinate chuckleheads to persuade.

As he walks along he seems to be bent on some perpetual errand. He has not wholly lost the character of his boyhood. *Who's Who* informs the world that after an elementary school he began his career as an errand-boy. He then passed through the stages of being a shop-assistant and a telephone operator. The latter function would seem more natural than any polite salesmanship. He would reject the maxim that "the customer is always right," while the discovery of new methods of correcting peccant subscribers would appeal to his ingenuity. Finally we are told that he

was a "Deputy newspaper circulation manager." In this capacity he could come nearer to dictating their tastes to the public.

You have in this man the inevitable result of his background, a cockney, ready of tongue, sharp of wit, warm-hearted by nature. The mop of curly hair which crowns his forehead and his pensive and purposeful lower lip are a gift to the caricaturist who is searching for character in his subject. The mass of the Labour Party may be negative and anonymous. Not so Herbert Morrison. He epitomizes and embodies Cockney London and adds a good deal more of Herbert Morrison. He is pleased with what he is and with what he has done. If the blend produced by his characteristics were not in fact the attractive thing that it is he would see no reason for changing or attempting to change them. His voice is an echo of the streets he represents.

If the leadership of the Labour Party with the accompanying prospect of the Premiership is a proper ambition for his aspiration he has been handicapped by the very success he has so far accomplished. For Herbert Morrison is London, and not England. He is to be associated with the ordering of the world's most populous and complicated capital and not with the multitudinous efflorescences of the British nation. It is the London County Council that has given him his reputation. He built up London Labour. Since 1934 he has been leader of the Council.

His reputation extended steadily beyond the Council Chamber. He became known not only as a formidable debater but as a man of reasonableness and moderation. When in opposition he grew to fame, not as a

ruthless striker down of the official castle, but as one who could prove the basic unsoundness of its foundations. So the Municipal Reformers on the County Council came to respect the intellect of this quiet but penetrating person who was always there to score the points and destroy their case. He has now attained a position in London of benevolent quasi-autocracy.

Yet this immense metropolitan prestige is a weakness as well as a source of strength. Outside London he is comparatively unknown, though he deserves to be well known. If it were not a contradiction in terms he should be described as "provincial." Within limits he has almost achieved the miraculous. While he is endeavouring with some success to endow the "Great Wen" with a corporate sense his interests do not seem to extend far beyond this pullulating parish. Within the parochial sphere his progress and that of his party have been remarkable.

Morrison's position on the London County Council shows no signs of being challenged in the immediate future. Municipally and Parliamentarily the stock of London Labour is high. Out of the sixty-two metropolitan seats no less than twenty-seven are held by Labour. Others may well go the same way at an early date. If the solid Socialist representation of the four West Ham seats is included the proportion approaches fifty per cent. When the total Labour representation in the House of Commons is barely a quarter of the whole the buoyancy of London Socialism is all the more noteworthy.

This condition of affairs is almost entirely the work of Herbert Morrison. The normal sequence is for municipal elections to follow and approximate to the

national results. In London the reverse has happened. Though Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Rothermere tried in their evening newspapers with their vast circulation throughout the London area to redden Herbert Morrison's mild opinions the municipal electorate thought differently. They accepted him as a safe man with ideas. They allowed him in 1934 to create a great Labour majority on the London County Council. No wonder if his prestige in County Hall tended to swell his notions of his own importance.

For Herbert Morrison is bent upon tidying up "my London." As a good member of the bourgeoisie he wears evening dress naturally but with calculated untidiness. When he is ordering the affairs of others he is consumed with a desire to make their lives more "tidy." If some humble disciple, enthusiastic for a philosophic justification of his faith and practice, were meekly to ask, "Please, Mr. Morrison, what do you mean by 'tidy'?" Herbert might find some difficulty in finding a ready definition. Does he mean "clean," "unwasteful" or "orderly"? Perhaps something of each epithet must contribute towards this nursery virtue. But I shrewdly suspect that the more accurate though less popular word would be "economical." "Let us spend," Morrison could be imagined saying, "but let us spend wisely."

To-day he has sunk back upon the throne of London, a genial despot with his considerable power circumscribed in scope and time. The foundations of his wider public reputation are the work he did as Minister of Transport between 1929 and 1931. So efficient and effective was he that he won from a

critic of Labour the compliment of being "the only success in the Labour Administration."

When the fissure developed between MacDonald and his Party it was expected by some who confused efficiency with masked Conservatism that Herbert would side with him, with Snowden and with Thomas. It has even been alleged that MacDonald, observing that Morrison was about to secede to his side, said privately to him, "Stay where you are; we must have an Opposition and a decent one too. You will be of public value in the next Parliament." This story is most improbable. It ignores the "leftward" tendencies of Morrison, only concealed by his faculty for fruitful compromise. It credits Ramsay MacDonald with a detached solicitude for our constitutional future. This anxiety could hardly have been possible in the condition of mental tumult under which he was labouring. But whether or not Ramsay MacDonald said anything of the sort the issue was decided by the electorate. Down went Morrison in the deluge, a result not wholly fantastic when it is remembered that he had been beaten in 1924. There is something admirable and quixotic in his fidelity to South Hackney. There were at least a dozen safer Labour seats in the metropolitan area open to the future Prime Minister of London.

So he lost his chance of establishing himself as the inevitable leader in Parliament. Instead he established Labour in London. When he got back to the House in 1935 those who had not heard or seen him before sat up abruptly. Here, they said, might be the real figure for which Labour was looking, a man of character, vision and energy, astute of tongue, prominent of personality. He was worth listening to, so

chart of London. He may be the man needed by Labour and the Nation.

Superior to all these three in pure intellect is Dr. Hugh Dalton. He is as complete an example of the importance of manner as Mr. Lloyd George. But, whereas manner occasionally makes the older man almost irresistible, Dalton's is by turns alarming and provocative. It dominates both himself and his companions. Long before he comes into view he can be heard talking in a voice that is far too loud for the public comfort. It is clear, arrogant and domineering. Its quality is excellent but it is incapable of modulation. He shouts to the world at large; surely in his whole life he can never have whispered a single monosyllable. Even his asides on the Labour front bench echo around the Chamber of the House of Commons.

Look down on the House of Commons during a division as Members troop past the Speaker's chair towards the Bar and you will be struck by the physical contrast between the two sides. Most of the Conservatives are well-nourished and the stature of many of them is developed to a great height. The majority of the Socialists are short, and many show the marks of a youth of toil and hardship. To this rule Hugh Dalton is an outstanding exception. Even among the Conservatives he would count as a tall man. No hard labour at an early age down a mine shaft cramped his full development. His father, a Canon of Windsor, sent him to Eton. Thence he went to King's College, Cambridge. Eton and King's neither deform the body nor repress the mind. They make a formidable educational combination and have in this case done



DR HUGH DALTON

*"When Hitler clawed power
with bloody fingers."*

everything possible to their alumnus. He is a man of terrifying maturity and superiority of intelligence.

In repose he looks unhappy and discontented. He seems to be brooding on the perversity of fate and the evil that is at large in the world. But an even more striking phenomenon is his laugh. It takes hold of his face and wrinkles his nose and forehead in a hundred furrows while its vibrations disturb the atmosphere over a vast radius. His pale blue eyes disappear in the access of hilarity. About his lively sense of humour there seems to hover a harsh and truculent daemon. He would inspire most circles with awe. To nervous well-wishing Socialists who have not had a tithe of his great advantages he must present himself as a terror. But they will tell you that, if you can survive the initial collision and can find some sympathetic subject, you will gain something from the conversation. His humour is not really so inhuman, and he is a storehouse of anecdote and information.

So it is said. But how can those of us who have never even experienced the personal collision be so sure? Upon the world he bears down like an intellectual juggernaut with a rolling gait that threatens to push all foolishness off the pavement. "The road for you!" he seems to bawl. "Take your chance in the tide of traffic! Gangway for the Labour leader!" Yet the impression is said to be as false as it is unfortunate. Within he is a man of cultivation and sensibility. Sarcasm and hectoring are the externals which discompose the unfamiliar. Discretion and understanding are the mark of the "gentleman," though they are not his monopoly; with this one a confidence is reputed to be as private as the grave. In his personal

RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN

dealings he knows where to stop and what to say. Eton and King's are not betrayed, though they may be inclined to rub their eyes at the political prodigy that they have begotten.

It was this man who was one of the minor successes of the last Labour Administration, and in a capacity where manners would seem to matter enormously. When Uncle Arthur Henderson as Foreign Secretary was solidly identifying himself with the will for co-operation and general disarmament, Hugh Dalton was his Under-Secretary of State. The previous team in 1924 had been Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Ponsonby; the pacifist outlook had then been dominant. But neither Arthur Henderson nor Hugh Dalton, the one a former wartime Minister and the other an ex-gunnery officer, could be described as a strict pacifist. What was perpetuated was the Etonian upbringing of both Under-Secretaries.

Hugh Dalton neither overbore nor offended his permanent officials. Nor did he get across the London embassies or foreign statesmen at Geneva. The solid ability and the wholesomeness of purpose within asserted themselves in spite of the trying external accidents. He won the respect of his opponents, among them that of Sir Austen Chamberlain—a respect worth having. While Hugh Dalton thundered away at the Government box in the name of the Labour Government, mixing the rhetoric demanded by party necessities with real knowledge and sound debate, Sir Austen, the architect of Locarno, would recline with the button boots containing his feet resting on the table, his tall hat perched on his eyebrows but supplying an obsolete dignity which the

pose of his body came near to impairing, gazing through his monocle at the loud-voiced young lecturer who was pleading for wider commitments. Austen was disagreeing with the thesis but recognizing the man of parts.

Very little feeling ever informs his speeches, save the emotions of contempt and indignation. And they seem to be slipped on and off as opportunely as the clothes of the speaker. He is a genuine scholar and has a rich command of fine language. His invective is first-class in matter but school-masterish and shrewish in tone. If he begins making an obvious effort to avoid the faults of which candid friends must have made him fully aware his voice drones on with a loud and metallic monotony. Sometimes he emphasizes his shouts by bringing his palm down explosively upon the despatch-box. But where he intends to be impressive he succeeds in provoking mirth. All laugh, his adversaries and supporters alike; the elaborate show of wrath is too funny to admire or applaud. At question time he stands up like a dominie determined to shrivel a pack of naughty children. Some carefully constructed bomb is furiously detonated. It arouses some enthusiasm behind him but much more derision in front. Here, says the House of Commons to its collective self, is a schoolmaster whom we can rag without any fear of painful retribution.

This unfortunate deportment has been accentuated by his career. He has been a lecturer at the London School of Economics, where his discourses were meaty but dogmatic. No liberties could be taken with him, the dominant response that he would excite being a sense of awe. If a pupil thought of daring to defy

him he could be cut down by a few sharp and heavy words. To-day he is a great power when the greater or less among the party rebels need a wiggling. He can reduce the self-important defaulter to half-size in a very few moments.

The progress of the Labour Party is his dearest ambition. He has no craven fear of the consequences of a Labour victory. "Office with Power" might be the central slogan of all those which he invents so aptly and utters with such deafening force. To that end he is always working. Where can we find new candidates? Is this seat more likely to yield to the courtship of a fresh Socialist suitor? If so, what type is he to be—intellectual, trade unionist, or glamour boy? All the time Hugh Dalton carries around in his head a huge constituency map of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Not only does he enjoy campaigning for what it may yield, but the fray itself stimulates him. He may see himself as a Napoleon of Socialism, and in one sense his superior, because he can survive the losses of several Waterloos.

Although Hugh Dalton has this half-sporting interest in politics he has a highly developed desire for victory. He can enjoy being teased but not being defeated. His unique and characteristic smile, carefully depicted at the beginning of my portrait, shows itself readily enough when he and his party are being pilloried in debate, provided the attack conforms with his ideas of "good taste." But so zealously does he hurl himself into the struggle for majorities, for office and for power that a defeat does him double the injury that it would inflict on another.

Dalton has had his fill of electoral experience and

electoral misfortune. It was soon after his return from war service that he sustained his first experience and his first rebuff. In 1922, when in the middle thirties, he fought and lost a by-election in the Cambridge that helped to frame him. At the General Election later in the same year he came within hundreds of capturing Maidstone—of all unlikely seats. At the election in 1923 he again failed at East Cardiff by another small margin. Yet again at a by-election in the summer of 1924 by almost exactly the same exasperating trifle he was swept down by the rising anti-Labour tide in an effort to hold Holland with Boston. Four narrow defeats in two years! That was surely enough to steel or sicken him. But one constituency was soon to pay him the tribute his intellect deserved, for at the Red Letter election he won Peckham against the tide. In 1931 he was to say "In 1924 Labour was cheated by a Red Letter. To-day we go out on a banker's note." But Zinoviev's alleged screed did not baulk Dalton of his first triumph.

For so stubborn and dauntless a warrior Peckham was not regarded as sufficiently secure. Early in 1929 the Bishop Auckland Division of Durham fell vacant and his wife was returned at the by-election. Three months later she stepped aside and made room for her husband, who roared his way in by a great majority. He had become as useful a Parliamentarian as he had proved himself to be a tireless campaigner. At the age of forty-two he now seemed firmly settled in a safe seat. But in the panic of 1931 he stumbled over what he would describe as the banker's ramp. He is back again and should now be exempt from any further unsettlements. With such electoral experience in a

host of localities he must have a keen electoral nose and may fairly claim to be the finished party manager.

And in spite of a real depth of culture he has come to be regarded primarily as the formidable boss. When he was up at King's he knew Rupert Brooke intimately. Such an environment and such an association made half the Hugh Dalton who is now known to politics. His contemporary, cut off early in the War, is enshrined in the memory of those who knew him as a beautiful figure possessed of immortal youth. Like the lover in Keats's "Grecian Urn" he will be exalted as a

Happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new.

But Hugh Dalton is condemned, or perhaps privileged, to go on plunging and labouring and shouting—as he himself might say—"down the gallery of life." The years of party warfare have touched him and whitened the fringe of hair that surrounds his high bald dome. He stands out as the probable Labour Foreign Secretary of to-morrow, one who, despite the mannerisms that are long past being controlled, would be a safe guardian of his country's honour. He could be trusted to insist on power behind his diplomacy; his more lurid adjectives are reserved, not for his opponents here, but for the "foul and sinister" powers abroad. He misses few opportunities to execrate Nazidom. He has described its advent with this resounding phrase, "When Hitler clawed power with bloody fingers." And to repel this monster he would demand the resource of abundant military, naval and air power.

Another man, some years his junior, but also from

the same Cambridge college, who might beat him at the post in the race into the Foreign Office, is Mr. Philip Noel Baker. He is equally well-informed, but, though he was Parliamentary Private Secretary to "Uncle Arthur" he has never actually held office, and has not the political experience of Hugh Dalton. Perhaps he varies too frequently between a mood of buoyant optimism and heavy despair. Dalton has an inner containment which gives him a superior ballast. A solution might be found in his becoming Foreign Secretary while Dalton was elevated to the position at which this chapter is aimed—the Premiership. But Dalton has been put last because frankly he is the least probable leader. It may seem a trifling observation, but democracy may not take too readily to a man who often has to shut his eyes when he is beginning one of his rotund oral essays in the English language. Why has he to do this? To exclude from his sight the faces of criticism or enmity to whom his words are to be directed? To give himself time to think? Or to gather a courage which has not been vouchsafed him in the bounty of nature? This weird and unfortunate habit may be richly significant. He may be at heart a humble man as he is in mind unquestionably an honest one.

I now re-read the qualities I have set out as necessary in the great Socialist leader, and I cannot find that any one of these four can score consistently well under each heading. Yet if there is a Prime Minister latent within the present Parliamentary Labour Party I will be bound he must be numbered amongst them. Cripps is altogether too incalculable to be reckoned

in this company. There may be faint claims to be advanced on behalf of Mr. Wedgwood Benn, the skilled fencer, with an experience of Parliament extending back into the days when he was himself an Asquithian Liberal. But, as he did not join Labour till 1927 when he was fifty, one must rule out this young man with the ageing body. And David Grenfell, the Welsh miner with the manly courtesy of a Prince, hardly seems to have the time left him to scale the rest of the ladder; moreover he has never yet held any office.

You must make your own choice. The Labour Party claims a trusteeship of democracy. You then are its servant and its master.

VIII

SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS

WHEN Mr. George Robey, in the course of his pseudo-pompous patter, refers to the Honourable and Learned Member for Bristol East as "Sir Stifford Crapps" one wonders whether he really knows how funny he is. It is more than a childish twist given to a well-known name; when regarded beside Sir Stafford's personality the incongruity is overwhelming. It is almost an indecency that one so austere should be the butt of this knockabout humour—almost, but not quite, so if you have often seen him you will chuckle or guffaw according to taste.

Without some such adventitious aid there is little to laugh at in Cripps. Sometimes in his intellectual stratosphere he mints the currency of an irony which is luminous enough to brighten his hearers into laughter, but comedy is not the normal medium of this tragic figure. His regular business is to utter lamentations, anguish and foreboding, to resurrect and revitalize Jeremiah, Job and Cassandra. And he does it magnificently, without a peer.

His mind is absolutely first-class. About his speaking there is that unanswerable quality which distinguishes really great advocates. In case you think I am given to exaggeration, ask a selection of High Court judges

who in their opinion, in respect of knowledge of the Law and power to plead, is the best man appearing before them at the Bar. If you have my experience you will be told, according to private predilection, either, "Cripps, without a doubt!" or "I'm afraid it's Cripps!" The Bench must be credited with some powers of judgment and you will be forced to recognize that he is in a class by himself.

So there was truth behind the jibe that when the Labour Party expelled him they were engaged in blowing their own brains out. He is a far better debater than any other member of the Labour Opposition. But, precisely because of his great capacity, the bosses of the Socialist Party found his heterodoxy too dangerous to ignore. Jerks on the leash from brilliant and turbulent lightweights such as Mr. Aneurin Bevan might not disturb the governing clique. But, when they were aided by the strong and sustained pull of the heavyweight Cripps, the masters cut the thong in alarm for their own balance. They consider complying with his request to be tied up again after the swearing of new oaths of fidelity to a policy so narrow as to remove any immediate likelihood of their all winning that which they are supposed to be after—office with power.

Cripps's desire to broaden the front of opposition can only be animated by the belief that the Government are so desperately bad that compromises must be made in order to kick them from their place. It used to be said that his earlier indiscretions were deliberately calculated to have the opposite effect. The theory, which I think is plausible, was that his thoughts ran, "We are not yet in a fit condition to



SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS

take over the responsibility of office. We are uncertain of our programme and poor in personnel. The National Government are devoid of purpose and direction, but they can't do any lasting harm and if they are allowed plenty more rope they will hang themselves past revival. What must be avoided is the early return to office of a Labour Government while our ideas are still unsorted and our leadership unsure. Therefore, while I go on serving my party with my customary and indispensable efficiency, I will indulge in the most crashing indiscretions. The Tories will quote these against me and they will thus be assisted to remain in office till the public confidence in them has rotted completely."

So he perpetrated a number of gaffes, the most famous of which, by his reference to Buckingham Palace, made it seem that he and his colleagues did not trust the Sovereign to remain constitutionally impartial. There was a period about 1934 when every speech from the mouth of Cripps was said to be worth a hundred thousand votes to the Government. This conduct did not ingratiate him either with those members of his own party in the House who were dreaming of getting the carrot of office between their teeth or with the Labour candidates for likely seats who saw his follies compromising their prospects.

The other Labour men of equal prominence are at a loss to decide whether he is a great asset or a big nuisance. The rank and file of the Party admire but suspect one who is intellectually, financially and socially so far their superior. He tries manfully and with total sincerity to establish easy relationships

with the sons of manual labour. His voice rings out with cordial greeting as he accosts "Jim" or "Tom" or "Fred," but though it is not so embarrassing as when that other successful lawyer, Sir John Simon, fitfully tries the same approach, there is a lack of happy spontaneity. And if Simon's motions are as unpredictable as an iceberg's, Cripps takes everyone wholesale into the ice age. You have to go with Cripps and stand shivering upon the frozen plains swept by the icy blasts of cold logic.

His position is sincere but slightly absurd. The Labour men beside and behind him smile a little cynically as he thunders away about "the working-class movement," the injustices suffered by "the working classes" and the need for "working-class solidarity." It is a fine voice, sonorous and rotund, but always tinged with melancholy. Lately he has been much given to raising it unnecessarily, the result, it may be, of too much popular preaching.

You have often seen him in photographs which commonly catch him in his most memorable pose—with his mouth wide open as though in acute physical pain. He might be howling. He looks unhappy, with the sorrows real and imaginary of others; he seems conscious that he is failing to fit into the political scene. All these maladjustments are reflected in his expression. Like many another man of sterling character he is deeply sensitive and cannot conceal the pain he feels when he is attacked for what he has said. Winston Churchill once described amid terrific applause the arguments which Cripps had slung across as a "loathsome speech." As the blows of the hammer fell upon him Cripps might have been on the

rack. He had his spatted feet on the table in the inelegant tradition of the occupants of the Front Bench. His legs writhed as though he was in actual physical agony. His mouth sagged at one corner, the unfailing sign with him that his personal feelings have been touched.

He has inherited this defensive temperament from his father, Lord Parmoor, whom the old *Morning Post* in one of the more caustic moods of its leader writer credited with having received a seat from the Conservatives, a peerage from the Liberals and office from the Labour Party. Sir Stafford's political fortunes may have fluctuated, his doctrines may have varied in their detail, but he has spent the whole of his political career in the service of one master—Socialism. So when he is shot at he will suffer the pains and enjoy the advantages of sticking to his guns: he will offer a plain target but he will be able to retaliate instantly and with interest.

He is in reality a youngster in politics. Before his body became so lean and ascetic he looked almost callow and immature. He had the wisdom of age planted on the shoulders of youth. At the invitation of Ramsay MacDonald he entered the Government on the retirement of Sir J. B. Melville to take his place as Solicitor-General. For several months he was actually a Law Officer without a seat in the House. East Bristol, a fairly safe Labour seat, fell vacant in January 1931, and Cripps was elected by a great majority. So from the beginning of his experience of the House of Commons he was located on the Front Bench. This lack of any Parliamentary apprenticeship may have contributed to his cold detachment of manner; the

temper of the House of Commons is most easily learned among the back benches.

Behind him was an education at Winchester where he belonged to nearly the same vintage as Alan Herbert, a little later than D. N. Pritt, several years before Sir Oswald Mosley. He had as his brother Law Officer the Attorney-General Sir William Jowitt, another lawyer of the top flight, handsome, leonine, courteous and cultured, whom Ramsay MacDonald had appropriated from the Liberals in 1929. Jowitt and Cripps together made the most formidable pair of Law Officers to hold office since the War. Of both it may have been true that, although the total emoluments of a Law Officer by a strange anomaly exceed two, three or four times the salary of the normal Cabinet Minister, some financial sacrifice was necessary when they accepted office. To-day Cripps is reputed to be far in advance of any of his fellow silks as a machine for attracting great fees.

Together they may have been the strongest element in a weak Government but their outlooks were vividly contrasted. Jowitt was ever the moderating and conciliatory influence, Cripps was quickly recognized as a consumer of fire. When the Government's Trade Union Bill was discussed Jowitt was at pains to prove that it had no vice and meant no sort of threat to a peaceful and orderly society. Cripps for his part welcomed the measure just because it might be dangerous. He would not be any less zealous for a measure even though it might make possible a General Strike. Why did Socialism exist except to completely destroy (Cripps loves to split his infinitives by way of concession to the more proletarian among his associ-



ates) the Capitalist system (with the stress on the second syllable as though it should be spewed out of the mouths of all rational men)?

When the crisis came in the summer of 1931 each man ran true to the form he had established. This partnership of outstanding ability was dissolved. Jowitt, who had sat for Preston, first in the Liberal and then in the Labour interest, followed his friend MacDonald into the National combination, but found himself unable to seek the suffrages of the Preston electors wearing yet another coat, this time of the peculiar "National Labour" cut. So he stood for the halcyon constituency of the Combined English Universities, the votes of whose electors can only be solicited by post. But this two-member constituency preferred an Anglo-Indian die-hard and an Independent lady to an elegant chameleon. If he had been able to face the music at Preston Jowitt would certainly have been elected and might still be as admirable an object as the leaning tower of Pisa.

Cripps's experience was very nearly as unhappy. He just missed defeat in Bristol East by the very narrowest of margins. But to miss defeat is as good as a margin of a million. All that really mattered was that he was back, and, when he had endured for some weeks the inevitable truculence of the triumphant Government supporters, he settled down as the mental mainstay of the Opposition.

His mind went on working in the House—as it had done in the Courts—with the grim efficiency of a well-tuned machine. His measured speeches for the prosecution seemed odious to hundreds of Members whose case a dozen considerations of breeding, station



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and fortune should have persuaded him to plead. But he united personal integrity with intellectual power and the wiser of his opponents were able to admire while they disagreed. A young Parliamentary Private Secretary once growled to his chief, "Stafford Cripps is a damned humbug!" You might be surprised to know who was the Minister who whispered back, "I don't agree. Can't you enjoy a great intellectual treat?"

But his conscience was not to leave him in comfort. He was conspicuously pugnacious in his denunciations of Japanese aggression and of the Government's alleged inertia in concerting collective action to meet it. But when, under the impulse and inspiration of Anthony Eden, the League of Nations began slowly setting Hoare's sanctions policy in motion, Stafford discovered that the whole ado was insincere, and that all that was happening was a clash of old-fashioned imperialisms. Accordingly he loudly opposed his own party's endorsement of sanctions. At the election too many electors in East Bristol overlooked his four years of invaluable and high-spirited opposition and confined their attention to the immediate question. He did not have the majority that his brilliance and industry had merited. But he was back again, sitting now on a back bench beside the absolute pacifist George Lansbury.

Again he has been the odd man out, the vassal of his own mobile but sincere convictions. After Munich all that mattered was the salvaging of the surviving shreds of freedom; Socialism could wait, although till recently it had been Socialism alone which could produce peace. Let Socialists therefore co-operate

with all who would work to turn out Chamberlain and company and to replace them by a Government which would risk everything in freedom's cause. Appeals and campaigns were started but with the constituency organizations Cripps's Popular Front remained unpopular.

Yet within the dark and legal raiment out of which he never seems to change, so that you imagine his very pyjamas must be black, is a man who alone among the younger and middle-aged members of the Opposition has the authentic qualities of a national leader. He has the courage of a Cromwell, the nobility of a Cecil and the professional attainments—of a Cripps. He is indefatigable. To him a Parliamentary Bill is as exciting as a romance. He swallows avidly the tough and turgid clauses as hungry workmen engulf beef steak. He can spend the whole working day in a complex appeal before the House of Lords and turn up mentally fresh in the early evening fit for a long series of short speeches on microscopic amendments during the Committee stage of some abstruse piece of legislation. He can make the legal problems live by the very force of his speaking. For days and days he can, before a Court of Appeal, go on making a speech, never losing the thread and always sufficiently helpful to the Bench. And though he could devote himself to gain and yet more gain as the flood of fees poured into his Chambers he is not averse from giving gratuitously of his best if he cares about the cause. His political activities must be costly in time, in money, and in disappointment.

While interpretation of the law has added enormously to his private wealth he is more interested in

changing it to redress what he execrates as the iniquities of a wicked and a wasteful system. To dethrone injustice is the passion of his soul. One day Cripps and I shall be gathered to our fathers. His character will undoubtedly qualify him for residence in the New Jerusalem. I may not enjoy the same security of tenure but I shall plead for periodic glimpses of heaven. For there, I am certain, will be Cripps, booming away, with occasional intervals for vegetarian refreshment, unfolding with superhuman fervour the injustices suffered by the denizens of hell.

IX

YOUTH?—I

THERE are several ways of being young. Your heart may not have been fighting its losing battle for so long as the hearts of some others, you may behave like a child, or, in spite of a substantial weight of years, you may sustain it with the outlook, the buoyancy and the cheerfulness that are proper to men of half your age.

In this third category I am bound to place Mr. Harold Nicolson. On consulting the appropriate reference book I find he is no less an age than fifty-three. That should not surprise you when you review what he has done, what he has written and the places he has inhabited or visited. But talk to him or hear him speak and you will soon forget that he is already so very old.

He is not a satisfactory politician. But what else can you expect from a man whose vision and experience of the things he discusses are so much longer and wider than the mean? He could hardly be a willing servant of the Whips or a servile worshipper at the shrine of any party leader.

His soft bland voice has been heard by millions when he has been radiating his agreeable trivialities. His utterance is sympathetic but precious. He makes a forest out of a solitary fern-leaf and tricks out the

tiniest incident with the most prodigal embroidery. He fashions an exquisite phrase and has the charming audacity to linger over it as he dangles his craftsmanship before your admiration. Is this the type to make a tempestuous entry into politics, to let loyalty cripple his fancy? No, you will say; yet you will be only partly right.

"Harold Nicolson Hits Out" would be a perfectly possible heading for the local press of the City of Leicester, one-third of which he represents in Parliament. This diplomat knows when to discard the velvet glove, and he hits straight and true with carefully chosen weapons from the language that he knows so well. And he has a number of firm loyalties. A few of them are Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, charity, elegance, Great Britain, and France. These are some of the people and things that matter to him.

You would not expect his political advent to be conventional, so you would look for his progress along a path that had at least the appearance of being lightly trodden. To-day he would repudiate any desire to limit our democratic liberties, but in 1931 he attempted to enter the House as a member of the New Party under the leadership of Sir Oswald Mosley. The result was farcical and to-day Harold probably exults in that earlier unsuccess.

His election in 1935 was as remarkable as his defeat in 1931. He had by now become "National Labour." While he felt superior to the title "Conservative", and shied away from the obsolescent label of "Liberal", he is about the only man in public life who still succeeds in endowing the words "National Labour" with real meaning. Such a standard-bearer

should approach problems without prejudice and with a fresh mind; he should not be tied to the chariot-wheels of any old-fashioned party. And so he has behaved, indeed he has cast in the Tory faces, with whose owners he has purported to be working, insults which they have hotly resented.

Go to his writings and you find the man. The less serious they are, the more characteristic will they be of their author. It was said that a stranger who was due to meet Charles Dickens for the first time funk'd the honour at the last moment—

As she reached for the bell
Her toothache got well—

and away he went because he was afraid that the great man would put him into a book. That frightening reputation is half deserved by Harold Nicolson. *Some People*, the wittiest book he has written, is too penetrating to be anything but authentic and autobiographical, and the casual acquaintance shrinks from too rapid an intimacy in case he may figure as a Titty or a J. D. Marstock in some future publication. Only a man with a mind as sensitive as a photographic plate could possibly charm his public with such delicate and delightful detail. All the time his companions are mildly aware that they are under observation.

He may have made his political start too late, though he would bring distinction to any office he held. His eyes would twinkle ambiguously behind their glasses as he read out some Parliamentary answer, finding humour in a comma and high significance in an indefinite article. But other books he has

written reveal that other side in him, a statuesque seriousness, a sense of the magnitude and renown of Great Britain. His Life of his father, Lord Carnock, and his narrative of Curzon's declining years are works of great sobriety into which there thrusts itself now and then the tipsy imp of frivolity.

He has always been on the most familiar terms with the best, his home is a Kentish castle, his wife is Victoria Sackville-West. From these fortresses he can watch the pageant passing before him, smiling festively at his own amusing thoughts, recording the delightful and the odd, always the dapper and distinguished youth amid a world of decay and change.

But it is only his air of youth that has beguiled me into setting Nicolson at the head of this chapter. His heart is as large as his head, he responds to romance and chivalry, but his curly hair and freshly coloured cheeks are a happy and engaging accident. Where do we find to-day in politics not only the appearance of youth but its abundant reality as well?

Certainly not in the Labour Party. A young Socialist Member is a great rarity. The party presents to the world a grey face lined with toil and years of strife. The Trade Unions still pay the piper and it is their more devoted servants who are given the main chance of going to Westminster. So many years pass before the official with political ambitions reaches its threshold. The few young men within the party are intellectuals. Very seldom does a Trade Union nominate any bright young man to watch its interests.

Mr. Aneurin Bevan was an exception. In 1929 he was elected for an impregnable seat in South Wales

when he was no more than thirty-two. The South Wales Miners' Federation recognized a man of intellectual force, fiery eloquence and fearlessness bordering upon insolence. Publicly and privately he typifies the popular notion of the Celt. Now Arithmetic tells you he has passed into the early forties, but he retains the instability which is the mark and the prerogative of youth.

When he is debating he speaks in the high-pitched sing-song of Ebbw Vale. Complaint, indignation and contempt colour all his arguments. But they are marshalled well and reveal the natural speaker. If he were a little less quarrelsome, if he were not so much the *enfant terrible* that Members of his own Front Bench have been known to turn round after a disorderly interjection and say "Behave yourself, Bevan!", if he were slightly more industrious, he might be the future leader whom Labour must discover unless half of our democratic organism is to be atrophied.

But, while he is genuinely indignant about social injustices and has the full-blooded courage that would brave prison or the firing-squad, he is in danger of growing into the dilettante observer of others' efforts and others' follies. With the equilibrium and the self-discipline which often keep a man silent when he is tempted to talk he should long ago have moved forward on to the Front Opposition Bench. Between 1931 and 1935 he debated so cogently that he was occasionally assigned an important task by the poverty-stricken leaders of the Opposition. But now he is always kicking against the pricks and that is fatal in the one army which fears above all that its privates may be out of step or breaking the ranks.

What confidence can Transport House—being itself and not Palace Chambers—feel in one who was associated with Mosley in the New Party and Cripps in the Popular Front?

A really great personal effort could save him, an effort by which he took hold of himself and his tongue. With a temperament as mature as his brain Aneurin Bevan might yet give the Socialist movement cause to bless both him and his restless intelligence.

Another man who would erroneously be called “a promising young Labour man” is Arthur Henderson. But he has just reached the Front Bench and is apt to be regarded as a young man because only half a dozen years ago his late father was Chairman of the Disarmament Conference. He makes the greatest use possible of question time; his supplementary questions betray great research and preparation. They are delivered inoffensively and in the manner of short speeches. When Labour is next called upon to supply a Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson (formerly “junior”) will be silently asking “Why not me?”

But to return to the men whose claim to youth is statistical and not accidental. Search diligently among the Labour ranks and you will find but two with any record of performance or promise of future achievement. There is G. R. Strauss, who entered the House in 1929 at the age of twenty-eight, lost his seat in 1931 and returned in 1935. He is able and fluent, fortunate in the possession of considerable wealth, but, from his party's point of view, unhappily tarred with the brush of Cripps.

The other is John Parker, who since 1935 has had the impossible task of trying to represent the Romford Division of Essex, a constituency with a population of more than a quarter of a million. Behind him is the Oxford Union, before him, at the age of thirty-three, stretches a vista of industrious anxiety in the service of a working-class party. There is nothing unorthodox about him: he will continue inoffensively to deliver sound speeches in a dull and diffident voice. Some day he may learn that the results of his labours are worthier of a more confident and audible delivery.

That is really the end of Youth Emergent in the Party of the future! Some day no doubt Labour will be reinforced in the House by a few Dick Crossmans, Frank Pakenhams and Hugh Gaitskells, but Oxford must wait until she has acquired a becoming antiquity. In the Parliament which began in 1931 after the wholesale supersession of elderly Socialist pensioners by dozens of surprised young National candidates there were over a hundred Members under forty. But the pensioners are back again, after displacing in many instances the young Tories who by reason of their youth could not be given safe seats. So the average age of the House of Commons has increased and is increasing, though it ought to be diminished.

It is an ageing place. Late hours, sedentary work, a multitude of petty anxieties which may flare up into major crises like boils on the neck make many Members old before their time. To be a legislator is the most uncertain and unsettling of all occupations. Public pressure requires that he should begin to cross the stream when he is still miles away from it. There

is besides that inevitable feature of any system of Government with the vaguest pretensions to Parliamentary democracy, that the ordinary member is the object of a thousand kicks to every one caress. So Parliament is a place where, to adapt Keats, "Youth grows old and . . . dies." But it does not grow "spectre-thin." Rather it takes on the outlines, to quote Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, of "senile convexity."

One such Member who has of late rapidly assumed the weight of middle-age is Mr. Robert Boothby, a man still on the promising side of forty. For fifteen years, ever since 1924 when he was hardly down from Oxford and was elected for East Aberdeenshire, he has persisted in showing promise. He is now able to begin a dictum with the remark, "I have been in this House for very many years," not unlike Lord Winterton, for whose inevitable references to his immense seniority the House is always on the watch.

Bob Boothby has not yet been elevated to office. He certainly would seem to have most of the necessary endowments, wealth, an Etonian education, intelligence, a thick hide, a forceful and an attractive personality. But for some reason he is deemed unsafe and too adventurous. When he made his maiden speech he dared to deal with subjects in which the House of Commons was not deeply interested, the stabilization of currency and the Gold Standard. At once he was credited with great economic erudition, and he has maintained his faculty for treating abstruse matters with a cheery vigour.

One of his earliest supplementary questions revealed a hint of his desire that Great Britain should treat Russia reasonably. Yet this conviction, more recently

so completely vindicated, did not prevent Winston Churchill, when as Chancellor of the Exchequer he was in the heyday of his anti-Bolshevik eloquence, from making this most amiable and amusing young man his Parliamentary Private Secretary. Ever since, and lately with more marked enthusiasm, he has been inclined to follow Churchill. But he has no prejudiced partisanship either for himself or anybody else. His standing is now sufficient to enable him to laugh at any gross extremes of party discipline; but he spares a good deal of laughter for himself. "I know what they think of me, but why should I worry?"

When in the spring of 1939 their deep-seated hostility to everything done in Russia was moving the extreme Right to say to the Government "Beware of any contact with these footpads," Boothby called Sir Henry Page Croft "the fifth column of the Nazis." If it is wise to conclude a pact with the Russians Boothby's tough "don't give a damn" attitude was useful. It runs persistently through all he says and does. But the effect is rather flatulent. A finely-trained runner covers a long distance without seeming to be making any unusual effort as he outstrips his rivals. He achieves great speeds but makes no haste. As Boothby's deep voice rapidly delivers his fresh speeches you feel you are listening to someone who is intellectually out of training. His words reverberate with great and breathless emphasis but without any ordered rhythm. Yet he is worth criticizing as, with more balance and less cynicism, he might attain the excellence which would attract a following. With such a start he may well become the father of the House. May his prestige grow with his increasing ounces.

It may satisfy him to know that for as long as he likes he will be able to make contributions to the most important debates of the House of Commons. But here is support for the complaint that in British politics youth is seldom or never served. For old men Youth with ideas makes an uncomfortable colleague. In the old the power is vested, so they wait till they can be sure that X. will be a safe companion without any disquieting impulses. When X. is sedate enough let him have office.

In politics seniority and experience command respect. These young men have the longest opportunity to acquire them, so to them the future belongs. Till the Labour Party learns to take a risk with youth it will always run the more mortal danger of decay and death.

Wisely—or happily—the little Liberal rump has three men who should for many years to come be able to serve their probably hopeless cause. They are Mr. Dingle Foot, Sir Richard Acland and Mr. Wilfred Roberts. Dingle Foot is the son of Isaac Foot, and makes to his father as great a contrast as does Gwilym Lloyd George to the Prime Minister who begot him. Isaac, who lost his seat at the last election after being unopposed in 1931, is a man of passionate conviction and stern habits of life. Before he has been speaking for very long he points a crooked forefinger to the unresponsive stars. He loves to quote historic protestants and it was once said of him that he could never deliver a speech without some reference to Oliver Cromwell. He calls in aid one usurper to resist all assumptions of arbitrary power.

But it is of his son I am writing, a young man who no doubt regards it as the duty of Liberals to challenge all forms of fresh authority. But, whereas his father's inspiration was the milk of pure nonconformity, Dingle Foot sustains his points with the arguments of cold legality. He makes a brave show as the upper and nether millstones of Socialism and Tory Democracy keep closing remorselessly upon the doomed little Liberal organism. The Presidency of the Oxford Union winnowed away any sentimental chaff in his spiritual heritage. He is a competent barrister who, if his party possessed the slightest hope of office, could be acclaimed as a law officer in embryo. He may admire passion in some and deplore its absence in others, but his political activities are completely devoid of this element which is so essential to great success.

Dick Acland too had a very political father. The Right Honourable Sir Francis Dyke Acland was a survivor of the pre-War Liberal Government. The son is actively engaged in endeavouring to defeat a tendency to shout. When he was at Oxford his reputation was built on the delivery of "fighting speeches"; his thoughts shouted as loudly as his voice. To-day the agitator has been replaced by the lecturer. When young Acland rises the House of Commons goes to school again. Another phase will follow and he will some day begin to converse in the slightly deferential manner which commands the commonest success in the House of Great Rhetoric.

But that assumes for him the possibility of electoral survival. The little knot of Opposition Liberals, now that Free Trade is dead, and while it is still a suicidal thing for an individual or class to make any but the

subtlest attacks on political liberty in Great Britain, seems doomed to the euthanasia of public indifference and exasperation. The very word "Liberal," to use a large L to express a dwindling party, is becoming inconvenient. Simon is said to be more favourable to plain "National." So all the Free Liberals turn outwards rather than inwards; their cause is the cause of liberty abroad.

Mr. Wilfred Roberts mingles earnestness, anxiety and indignation in his pleas for refugees and for the devoted adherents of the Spanish Republican cause. There is no sense in reserving the adjective "sincere" for particular politicians; all of them have their moments of deep sincerity and artful expediency. But if anyone were asked to describe the most dominant quality about this man of the sorrowful expression he would spontaneously say "sincerity", and that is an enviable reputation.

That seems to be the sum total of effective youth, where in a healthy Parliament youth is to be most urgently sought—in the Opposition who must some day come into their own. Paradoxically there is a far larger element in the Government parties. They make a mixed grill. Boothby's personality has already succeeded in getting him reviewed out of his turn! The rest include men like Mr. R. A. Butler, who has already had several years' experience of important office, and others like the son of Lord Halifax, Mr. Charles Wood, for whom, if heredity and influence are going to be allowed to count, office is as certain as the rising of to-morrow's sun.

Who dares to say that birth does not matter? Be

born a Butler, and, if you work, all will go well with you. Mr. R. A. Butler is not handicapped by genius, originality or emotion. His qualities are more pedestrian but far more profitable. Only in the sense of taking infinite pains can he lay any sort of claim to genius. He is an ideally efficient minister, industrious, full of accurate information which he is too cautious to divulge, and immune from warmth. He has drifted steadily forwards with uninterrupted success. At Cambridge he took two first classes and automatically became President of the Union without any opposition. A fellowship did not fall into his lap but came to him as the reward of monumental diligence and accurate scholarship.

When he had been in the House only three years Baldwin selected this Butler at the age of thirty to carry on his family's work for India. He was appointed Under-Secretary at a most critical moment, just when the Joint Select Committee was setting out on its Search for a Constitution. This office he held for four years and a half, and, if he did not exactly cover himself with glory, he delivered the milk without spilling a drop. From Sir Samuel Hoare he learned the value of taking infinite care. Another tough task awaited him when he was moved to the Ministry of Labour. Since Lord Cranborne's resignation he has been Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. With complete calm he has succeeded in feigning ignorance and giving nothing away.

"I am a beginner," he seems to say as he adds to his reputation for stone-walling. Meanwhile more authoritative men prepare to score a few runs from bowling which he has been carefully exhausting.

Never can the Opposition rattle this perfectly collected scholar into showing temper or committing an indiscretion. While he is speaking or answering questions the whole of our Foreign Policy is in suspense. To the real craftsmen of policy he must be a treasure; Eden in the same office presumed by his depth of feeling and clearness of vision substantially to affect policy. Butler is incapable of such presumption.

He possesses the great advantage of a clear voice; when he is once again allowed to say something of importance everyone will be able to hear. His own future is vitally important to him, but he is young enough to be readily amused, at himself or at others. The practice of eloquent silence has been pursued with wan solemnity, when suddenly and spontaneously he bursts into a hearty *giggle*. In his boyhood there may have been no time for mischief. He was industriously making ready to be a complete Butler. Some attractive fount of fun is ever waiting within his overworked body to gush out and make up for all the years that have been squandered in useful toil. If the gushes were allowed a freer outlet his efficiency would not suffer a jot of harm.

Of Mr. Butler many would say, "Here is a young man pre-destined to leadership. Nothing could keep it away from him." Yet it is not simple to foresee any such climax. He cannot be offered to public admiration as the passionate patriot, the philosophic aristocrat or the honest simpleton. The Conservative party seems to need one of these three characters to navigate its man-of-war.

Another man with an astonishingly similar record, equipment and training is Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd. He

is thirty-two and looks twenty-five. Dark glossy hair, with peculiar tints of gold, crowns the head of this young knight-errant. Long ago Lord Baldwin was attracted by his blameless and solitary rectitude. He will never look very old, but he has never been very young. Like R. A. Butler, he takes extreme trouble, but unlike him he manages to convey information to his inquisitive audience. Faithful service to Mr. Baldwin as Parliamentary Private Secretary was rewarded by promotion to the Parliamentary Secretaryship of the Home Office. In this capacity he conducted himself as a model Under-Secretary. He is now Minister of Mines, and in that office he will soothe to peace the turmoils of the scores of mining Members on the Labour benches.

Before going down from Cambridge Lloyd had actually fought an election. South-east Southwark was sufficiently impressed by this political infant of twenty-two to give him over 7,000 votes. In 1929 he took over from Neville Chamberlain the Ladywood Division of Birmingham which was going to be a certain loss. He must be all that a candidate can be, for at that election with the tide racing against his party he achieved the seemingly impossible. In a poll of nearly 33,000 a majority of 77 was only diminished to the point of a defeat by 11! So Geoffrey now aged twenty-seven was within an ace of a mighty electoral triumph. His revenge came soon. In 1931 he won the same seat by the great margin of exactly 14,000 votes. He was selected by Baldwin to propose the Address; this ceremonial task he performed with sculptural diction and from that moment he was a made man.

Polite, conventional, full of elegances of phrase, he avoids crises and appeases opposition. All the while he is confident in the knowledge of belonging to the governing type. Wherever Geoffrey is in a Government his chiefs can be sure is a little pocket free from the mistakes that accompany shoddy and impatient workmanship. But could this pale Galahad ride at the head of a charging cavalcade? Till the people's taste for romance is quite dead, and till there are no longer any knights left to satisfy it, a Lancelot from the ranks of chivalry may be preferred as leader in battle. But where to-day will you find your Lancelot?

Lloyd and Butler exhibit the prim accuracy of Cambridge. Turn back to Oxford and contemplate Mr. R. A. Bernays, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport. His mind responds swiftly to attacks, hostility and comedy. When, as a Samuelite Liberal, he entered the House in 1931, he was on the staff of the *News Chronicle*. When, as a Liberal, he declined to accompany the rest of his group into formal opposition, he and his paper parted company. This treatment, for which no doubt his employers had excellent reasons, depressed him profoundly. He could mournfully complain "Am I not a snappy journalist?" And certainly he wielded a pen quite as robustly as he spoke.

But opportunities soon came to him. In his earlier Parliamentary days the Government's foreign policy seemed flagrantly vulnerable; a little later the Labour Party attracted his carefully planned assaults. He had visited Germany and was both depressed and im-

pressed by the arrogant self-immolation of the Nazi youth. So he shot and shot successfully at an Opposition that was all swearing and no swords. He had knowledge of foreign affairs, so the 1935 election seemed almost designed for him. He progressed naturally from Samuelite to plain Liberal, and on to Simonite. In this last capacity he could expect promotion, for "Liberal National" has long meant the heritage of office.

His early experiences were unhappy. He had to live through and live down his own inadequate attempts to meet Mr. Alan Herbert's broad satire on the Population Statistics Bill. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health he had to endure the fading but indignant protests of property owners at what they deem to be the predatory policy of slum clearance. Each smack makes his hide a little thicker. He will perhaps come to regard his own distresses as objectively as he delights in the discomfiture of others. As yet he has half a sense of humour, though the part he does possess is of a monstrous size. With his journalist's vision he can laugh at the foibles of opponents and even of colleagues. When Robert Bernays becomes to himself an object of fun as well as a desperately serious young Minister he will find life a fuller and less nerve-racking experience.

The observant journalist still dominates his behaviour. He loves to try to epitomize a great and complicated situation in a single telling phrase. The discipline of minor office may be irksome, but he has much of the intellectual tackle necessary to great success. Not least is the possession of a clear and beautifully agreeable voice. Its attractiveness is

heightened by a stammer which must have troubled his boyhood and lingering adolescence.

Another Liberal National who was remembered, but only just in time, is Mr. William Mabane. After years of loyal and patient industry he had his athletic feet placed on the very lowest rung of the official ladder by being made Assistant Postmaster-General. But just as he was profoundly dissatisfied by being a private Member so he will not rest until he is in the Cabinet. He may therefore have before him a long vista of unquiet years. Henry V observed, "If it be a sin to covet honour, then am I the most offending soul alive." Let Mr. Mabane take heart; his covetousness is quite without reproach.

Just over a year ago a public which had served up to it a highly sensational story about Parliamentary Privilege and Official Secrets must have asked itself, "Who is Mr. Duncan Sandys?" He is a man born in 1908 and in a dozen ways the favourite of fortune. His father, a soldier, who was also a Member of Parliament, sent him to Eton and Magdalen. Afterwards he entered the Diplomatic and, though that Service is full of other young men with a kindred upbringing, he retired in 1933. In the spring of 1935 the safe Conservative seat of Norwood fell vacant and he was nominated and elected. His majority at the by-election was reduced by the intervention of an Independent Conservative candidate who enjoyed the support of the Churchill family. It is said that during this campaign he met one of the daughters of Mr. Winston Churchill. They married and Duncan

Sandys came directly under the most volcanic influence in politics.

He spoke often on a wide range of subjects. He had certain physical advantages, great height, a certain endowment of good looks, Titianesque hair and a loud if rather grating voice. Not only was he audible to all within normal earshot but he was plainly visible to the Speaker.

Sometimes Mr. Sandys spoke of social conditions, at others he took the British Empire under his wing. But, as befitted one whose political star must be shown to be rising, he concerned himself mainly with Foreign Affairs. His maiden speech delivered on 2nd May, 1935, was a bold statement loaded with miscalculations of Germany's intentions. "I wish," said he, "to emphasize my firm conviction, based upon exhaustive inquiries in the highest quarters in Berlin only a fortnight ago, that Germany intends without reservation scrupulously to observe the terms of the Treaty of Locarno." He rejected the formation of an anti-German bloc in favour of "an agreed settlement on the outstanding points of difference." "I believe," he went on, "that the announcement of the German rearmament programme brings new hope of a general limitation of arms of all countries." He argued that we should withdraw any imputations as to Germany's unworthiness to administer Colonial mandates and then clearly ask her freely to renounce all territorial claims in the Colonial field. In other fields let Germany be satisfied but never let her colonial demands clash with our imperial interests. These oracular and ingenuous opinions are here quoted without the addition of any further adjectives.

By an amusing irony Mr. Churchill followed and administered a rebuke for the reproach Duncan Sandys had made against Britain's policy towards Germany. Mr. Sandys needed to learn that you cannot indefinitely offer the sacrifice of other people's interests to an acquisitive Power. He was young enough to learn this lesson. He imbibed it so thoroughly that he was later to become a thorough-paced follower of Eden and his father-in-law.

By midsummer 1938 he was complaining of the Government's attitude to the sinking of British merchantmen by the aircraft of General Franco. In a very careful speech he contended that even with full belligerent rights the Spanish insurgent forces would have no right to sink merchantmen—even if they were flying the Spanish Republican flag. He argued that we could prevent the recurrence of these attacks either by reprisals—the seizure of Spanish insurgent vessels, a course which he did not advocate—or by actively protecting the merchantmen right up to the moment of their entry into harbour. This was his most effective speech. It produced two days later a *non possumus* answer from the Prime Minister.

But within a week Mr. Sandys was the centre of a disturbance whose echoes are still reverberating. As a second-lieutenant in the Territorial Army he was being trained in anti-aircraft gunnery. To his notice there came information of the alarming deficiency of guns and instruments. In a private conversation he told these facts to Mr. Hore-Belisha, the Secretary of State for War. When Hore-Belisha seemed incredulous Sandys sent these figures to him with a draft Parliamentary question which he proposed to ask.

No doubt, if Hore-Belisha had said, as is often done, "I should be obliged if you would not ask this question; it is really contrary to public interest. Anyway, do you mind telling me where you got your information from?" Sandys might have said, "All right. If you say I shouldn't ask it, of course I won't. If I tell you how I got these figures will you see that nobody suffers?" Hore-Belisha is not that kind of Minister. He inquired of the General Staff, who told him there was clearly a serious leakage of extremely secret information. So he instructed the Attorney-General to interview Duncan Sandys and put before him the legal position under the Official Secrets Act.

"The plot thickens," might now be written. Would "plot" mean "narrative" or "conspiracy"? It would bear the former meaning. But to shorten the story, Sandys raised the question as one of privilege and a motion was put down to set up a Select Committee to inquire how far the Official Secrets Act applied to Members of Parliament when carrying on their Parliamentary duties. But the House of Commons had the crowning sensation when only two days later Mr. Sandys arose again at the end of Questions, this time to say that, although Parliament was considering the question, a military Court of Inquiry had been set up and had ordered him to appear before it in uniform next morning in order to give evidence! There was a clamour of protest, as four Members out of five felt that their position was being assailed. The new question was, on the motion of the Prime Minister, referred to the Committee of Privileges who "without casting any reflection on the Military Court" proceeded to find that there had been a breach of privi-

lege. The original question is, at the moment of writing, still undecided.

Such is the bare outline of what came to be called the "Sandys storm." But deep and serious matters underlay it. Not only is there the question of the use a Member may make of secret information which falls into his hands and the extent to which he is bound to divulge the source of that information if the police demand to know; and not only was the authority of Parliament being pitted against the position of the Army. I have no doubt that Members of Parliament who take their duties seriously would consider these issues sufficiently grave. But there was besides the underlying cause of the whole rumpus. Perhaps he did not fully know how delicate his question was, but Sandys had managed to put his finger on a specially tender spot.

The extent of our confusion and unpreparedness was revealed round about the crisis at the end of September. It is now public property that the anti-aircraft teams were deficient in guns and also in the equipment necessary to fire them efficiently. Little or no provision had been made for the comfort of the men who would have had to handle the artillery. Against this perfectly reparable shortcoming Hore-Belisha, a most astute dialectician, proclaimed later on that if the test had come we should have given "quite a good account of ourselves." He also declared that a surfeit of guns was unnecessary. Determined and repeated attacks by enemy aircraft will certainly succeed in penetrating defences at some points. But is there any reason for leaving any element in those defences to chance? Is the psychological effect on

the enemy of a complete ring of anti-aircraft guns around the populous objective to be totally discounted? And was it to be supposed that the probable enemy was wholly ignorant of these deficiencies? Undoubtedly Sandys's conduct, unconventional as it may have been, helped to spur the authorities into action.

The effort needed for Sandys, aged thirty, to stand up at the time of day when the House of Commons was most crowded and impatient—not once but twice—and make a statement which could be immediately misconstrued as a spiteful attempt to embarrass that Government of which he and his associates were known to be critical cannot, I imagine, be overrated. This action needed the kind of courage which appreciates repercussions and yet marches forward. The Attorney-General had given him a written assurance, as he was entitled to do, that the police powers of interrogation under the Official Secrets Act would not be used against him. So Sandys would have had ample excuse for trying to drop the matter at that point. The nerves he must have felt, unless he is wholly insensitive, could have been momentarily quietened. Whatever his motive he persisted—fortunately, as matters turned out, for at once came the summons from the Military Court. Suppose he had failed to act in the first instance how would he have stood with regard to giving the evidence for which the Court ordered him to appear?

Happily for himself and for the House of Commons he did not shrink away from the first public ordeal muttering "They are not going to do anything to me. I can't face the House. I needn't do it." True, he was

assured of the friendly but powerful impulse of Mr. Winston Churchill, but the comments that this association might provoke would not be so reassuring.

I observe that Mr. Sandys has already occupied more space than his present importance would seem to justify. I use the word "present" advisedly, because if there is one person in public life who will insist on appearing as important as is humanly possible it is Mr. Duncan Sandys. He certainly is efficient enough to do the work of a junior Minister. But his boldness has not enhanced his chances for the immediate future. A young man who is responsible for so much consumption of Parliamentary time, and is so openly critical of the Administration can hardly be *persona grata* to those men who count so much in the filling of vacant offices—the Whips. None the less his feet are on the ladder, so are his hands—his name should rhyme with "hands" and not "candies"—and he has shown that any effort to dislodge him may have uncomfortable consequences for the assailants. So there is little danger of his bright head suffering a total eclipse.

Such a possibility does not occur to him. He has an unattractive habit of trying to boss everything within reach. Early in 1939 he was the centre of a movement called "the hundred thousand." Without avowing hostility to the Government he sought to gather together into one organization every "progressive" who was tired of the way in which our affairs were being conducted—for what? Nobody knew for certain. It was vaguely suggested that help should be given to candidates who shared the unexceptionable sentiments appearing on the movement's literature.

Duncan Sandys, after endeavouring high-handedly to forestall any criticism there might be, took the chair in one of the more ornate rooms in Caxton Hall. The elegance of the Chair was only excelled by the address of the Chairman. During his opening remarks, devoted largely to exposing the progressive weakness of our foreign policy, he was the admired object of a few politicians, many journalists and more pundits. For, while the meeting had been originally described as a conference for semi-private consultation, the affair had leaked into wide circles and hundreds of men and women were there out of mere curiosity.

This performance lasted for a period of general unanimity. But when Sandys disclaimed any thought of subverting the Government the growls began to be audible. Clearly what was in the minds of most of them was "How can we get the policy we want so long as Chamberlain, the parent of its opposite, is there?" This dissent foreshadowed what seemed bound to happen—speakers exceeding their time and expressing wide and irreconcilable degrees of hostility to the Government. Sandys had neither the skill nor the experience to weather the storm and the first four hundred of the hundred thousand separated in confused frustration.

This meeting did neither him nor his objects any good at all, save that it introduced him to a by no means negligible section of the public. Many of them—women as well as men—had speculated on what "this Duncan Sandys" looked like. When they saw him they doubtless felt that if sensations have to be caused he was as appropriate a young man to cause

them as anyone else. Personally the show may have been worth while, politically it was a failure. But Sandys is still of the age when indiscretions are the right and proper mode of ebullition. It will be safe to say when challenged later on "Oh, *that* was when I was a very young man. Do you expect me to justify all the excesses of my youth?"

X

YOUTH?—II

WHEN Mr. Sandys's action was being debated the remark was made of him, "If he were in my company he would be drilling with the recruits." This bright little gem of rudeness fell from the lips of Major—more recently Colonel—Macnamara. What sort of author do these words, divorced from their context, suggest to you? Probably the most confirmed Blimp conceivable, the soul of disciplinary indignation, a creature with a sensitive nose for the faintest smell of insubordination. I am glad to say that in making any such inference you would be as wrong as you could be. Colonel Macnamara is the gentlest being in the world. His voice and appearance proclaim the undergraduate. But he has a strong preference for doing and saying things on the prompting of Colonel Macnamara and nobody else.

In Germany he would be admired as an utter Aryan. But his Aryanism is of the Anglo-Saxon and not the Prussian sort. He may be jealous of the prominent authority in the Territorial Army with which he has been vested at the age of thirty-four—he smiles at the world with the face of twenty-one. But he understands liberty and repudiates every sort of blind obedience to rigid leadership. Before he had been

in the House more than a few months a question was asked about the alleged refusal by the Irish Free State authorities to allow the employment of English and Scots workers in Free State factories and the questioner asked that Free State citizens should be precluded from obtaining employment in England or Scotland. Colonel Macnamara—then Captain—produced this supplementary question: "Is it not a fact that Irish Free State citizens are, in our eyes, British citizens; is it not much better that they should be treated as such; and is it not also better to go in for a policy of removing pin-pricks, rather than a policy of aggravating them?" Later events give the question a faded and obsolete complexion; but it could not have been asked by a die-hard.

Three months later he was defending the freedom of speech guaranteed to the Fascists but describing Jew-baiting as "ungentlemanly and very un-English." Possibly it deserved even harder words than this mild denunciation. Captain Macnamara seemed to be of the same opinion, as in a moment it had become "a very horrid evil." When the Spanish Civil War broke out his desire to see facts for himself caused him to visit Spain. He came back with the truth—so repugnant to the many violent English partisans of either side—that while Franco may not have been an exact imitation of his Fascist allies in Italy, the Republican side certainly did not consist solely of murderous Communist assassins. To his mind there was vouchsafed the fact that Spanish neutrality might be a difficult thing to preserve once Franco had prevailed with the assistance of German and Italian arms. These things he said to the disapproval of large numbers of

his colleagues, who desired so dearly to see practical and intellectual disaster overtaking the Opposition's championship of the Republican cause.

He has openly deprecated "back-scratching" support of the Government. The occasion was a discussion on the Special Areas. He may not be cast in a heroic mould, but he has certainly grasped the rudimentary truth so often ignored by party politicians that the safety and welfare of the British people is somewhat more important than the convenience and collective caprice of any political party—even the party of patriotism.

When Eden resigned Macnamara was found not to have voted in the division. When the merits of Munich were measured by a Parliamentary vote he marched into the Government lobby. Perhaps the integrity of Spain seemed to him a more important factor in Britain's security than the survival of Czechoslovakia. Who can say that this naïve young man was wrong? But who can say he was either half wrong or half right?

After the first of these two Parliamentary upheavals the Prime Minister did something which was either very cold-blooded or very tactless. Mr. R. A. Butler, that model of departmental efficiency, was made Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs to assist the Prime Minister in the Commons in his discharge of the duties which Eden had relinquished. That made a vacancy in the Parliamentary Secretaryship to the Ministry of Labour. Who should fill it? Mr. Neville Chamberlain looked around him and easily caught sight of the towering and handsome stature of Alan Lennox-Boyd.

Now Mr. Lennox-Boyd's views of Foreign Affairs were as remote from Mr. Eden's as is possible in any two Conservatives. Not only had he been a stalwart supporter of Winston Churchill in the Indian controversy. Not only had he close and consistent affinities with many movements on the extreme Right. He was an open and enthusiastic supporter of General Franco. He was not in any sense taking Mr. Eden's place, though the public was apt, here and there, to apply this construction. But his appointment smacked of a deliberate affront to Anthony Eden.

On the first day of the "Eden debate" Mr. Lennox-Boyd made a speech excellent in form and, of course, fully supporting Mr. Chamberlain's policy. "I can assure the Prime Minister that the country as a whole . . . is very solemnly behind him." "Whether we hope for a victory for the Insurgents *as I do* . . ." His penultimate passage was a sympathetic reference to the physical strain under which he said Eden must have been working. ". . . Remember the possible dangers caused by supplementary questions if in the answer there is a word wrong here or there, or undue stress is laid on this word or that by the Minister in his reply which might land this country in intolerable difficulties." He thought that, without gagging the House, a means could be devised by which those responsible for foreign policy could be released from the daily harrying of innumerable and unexpected supplementary questions.

So spoke, it might be thought, a man of unchallengeable discretion. And Mr. Chamberlain may have felt that, however outspoken Lennox-Boyd's sympathy with the Spanish Insurgents, he could not find many

opportunities for observations on the Foreign situation if his work kept him in the Ministry of Labour. Would it not be good to turn his loyal and able support to Ministerial use?

But Lennox-Boyd had no intention of holding his peace. After the invasion of Austria the question of Czechoslovakia's future became prominent. Would Chamberlain guarantee her or would he not? Mr. Lennox-Boyd had no doubts at all. He said publicly in his constituency that there would be no guarantee "if he knew Mr. Chamberlain."

Critics of the Government did what they were bound to do; they swooped cruelly upon this gratuitously offered morsel. Poor Mr. Lennox-Boyd, from being naturally cock-a-hoop and stepping on air, suffered severe rebukes both privately from his own chiefs and publicly from the Opposition. So he had to appear in a white sheet and kiss the rod.

This was a harsh and humbling experience. Lennox-Boyd did not deserve to be the victim of his own hilarious indiscretion. He was so gay and charming that he had enemies only among those whom his extremeness of views had offended. One such adversary was Mr. Emanuel Shinwell, with whom he had had a first-class Parliamentary tiff. But he presented with his abundant inches a complete type—Oxford, with her charm, her humour and part of her sparkling cultivation. His good looks were just redeemed from the tedious perfection of the theatre by an expression of acute and observant irony. Behind the social façade there was clearly a respectable and masculine intellect.

The anterior tense is used, for he has lately under-

gone a heavy load of personal bereavement. He is rapidly moving away from carefree and irresponsible youth. The metamorphosis, so severe, so complete, so impressive, is not yet over. Here, strange though it may now seem, leadership might be discovered. But whether he can conscientiously modify his views, or whether responsibility will exercise its traditional moderating influence so strongly as to make him more widely acceptable, cannot yet be known. One thing is known: he will not consciously trim his sails to secure his own advancement.

Contrasts are agreeable even within the same fold of power. One young man who could never enact an indiscretion without carefully calculating its effect on himself, his colleagues and his leader is Mr. Scrymgeour Wedderburn, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland since the end of 1936. He is nearly as tall as Mr. Lennox-Boyd, two years his senior, but in deportment quite twenty years on. Like him he was President of the Oxford Union. He is as conspicuously good-looking, but with Wedderburn fun is always a secondary matter—a recreation, not an absorption.

He was one of the wisest of Stanley Baldwin's choices. There is a massive solemnity about the Scots which prevails over their moments of more exuberant licence. In Parliament Scotland has to receive a fixed proportion of time, and Scotsmen of all parties like to have their affairs handled by an authentic countryman with the profound seriousness that alone can sustain their weight. Wedderburn is all that they could wish for. He speaks admirable English with the

beautifully melancholy inflection that only a Scotsman can master. He has even been known to quote Scottish poetry—presumably Robert Burns—in the unblemished original. While he is speaking only a distant twinkle of the eyes betrays a humour that is delicate and not pawky. Broad comedy, passion, sentimentality are far beneath him; he is an intellectual teetotaller.

To his quiet detachment a bewildered English public might one day turn for the kind of tranquillity which Bonar Law died desiring. He is offensive to no one, not even the reporters who could never imagine themselves having to write of him "Mr. Scrymgeour-Wedderburn made an observation which was inaudible to the Press Gallery." Seen and heard from above most men lose all their impressiveness and half their character. But Wedderburn survives even this test.

Mr. Wedderburn holds the odd dignity of hereditary standard-bearer of Scotland. The regalia to which heredity entitles him are exquisite beyond words. Even among the passionate splendours of the Coronation he made a dazzling figure. What will heredity do for Mr. Richard Law, the son of a former Prime Minister? In all parties it is a valuable thing to be the offspring of an established or historic statesman. But any success that Law achieves will not be the result of his lineage.

If he had chosen to push himself and to sing the popular theme song of each successive hour he would long ago have been in office. But he can only trouble himself to speak the language of Richard Law. The

political patois of Ramsay MacDonald, Stanley Baldwin or Neville Chamberlain has been something which he has never bothered to copy. Very rarely he shakes himself out of a condition of somnolence and then delivers a speech which pricks the conscience of somebody, most commonly an important member of the Government. Underlying a surface of slow and cynical amusement is a rapidly moving mind and a bright flame of conviction.

His friends say that he is "good company." And certainly, as one who is utterly without any of the graces of the orator, and completely cloaks any ambitions that may animate him, he is sure of the good graces of a party which exalts the commonplace. As a fact, there is nothing commonplace about him. It is said that he is sometimes unable to conceal his knowledge that politics should be treated as a philosophy and not a sportive conflict. A sudden contribution by Richard Law to a random conversation will translate it from concrete instabilities to abstract reality.

He would be horrified if he were seriously informed that he was a man of deep moral earnestness. For he is the antithesis of a prig; if he were such a being, all and sundry from the Prime Minister to many of the citizens of Hull who have seen but not spoken to him, would never call him "Dick." His deceptively lackadaisical manner epitomizes an American aphorism, "We don't know where we're going, but we're on the way."

Mr. Law, the paternal Tory Democrat, might be set on the left of his party. But to be younger than

forty is not synonymous in the Conservative Party with being Radical. There are two young men of thirty-eight who are able to out-Lennox-Boyd. They are Mr. Victor Raikes and Mr. Roy Wise, about both of whom their adversaries would say that they are the most unqualified reactionaries. They have little else in common besides their opinions.

Mr. Wise has a great gift of irritating his opponents. He has a clear contempt for those with whom he disagrees and the highest assurance of being right. But if his critics would say his conclusions are stupid he is certainly not himself a stupid man. Nor can his constituents think so. In 1929 he was defeated by Sir Oswald Mosley, who was then a Socialist, in the industrial division of Smethwick. But he won it in 1931 and held on in 1935, though he was an audible opponent of sanctions against Italy.

Work in the Colonial Service in Kenya gave him a strong Imperial consciousness. Of all men he would be most inflexible about any colonial concessions to Germany. What view he takes of lavish guarantees and a possible pact with Russia it is not difficult to imagine, and he never shrinks from strong declarations on Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Raikes, on the other hand, though a prominent member of the "Imperial Policy Group," might once have been found to welcome an agreement with Germany on this very colonial issue. He looks at the problems of 1939 with the eyes of the eighteenth century. His opinions may not seem contemporary but he delivers them in a fearless treble voice in good language and without notes. He seems to be sprung from an age of squires and landed privilege and to be chanting

a dirge over the days that can never be recaptured. This he does as well as it can be done as he has not forgotten the history he once learned.

Give Mr. Raikes the business of expounding foreign policy and you will hear, not perhaps what you would like to hear, but at all events something worth hearing. He really belongs to the House of Peers. He would certainly sink comfortably on to the benches of pride and privilege. He is more than a politician; he is a phenomenon. His existence is not credible till it is seen, and once seen is not likely to be forgotten. If he has never been young there seems no reason why he should ever grow older. Forty years hence one feels he will be at hand ready to analyse the weakness of any system of government that may then obtain and to recite eulogies of the nineteen-thirties with their wealth of anecdote. He will still punctuate his thoughts with lordly little gestures of the hand and head.

Alongside Robert Boothby should have appeared Mr. Brendan Bracken, his junior by a single year. But, whereas Bracken deserves early treatment, Boothby demands it as of right. No conscience could have rested till he had been decently saluted.

Both of them are independent in mind and to the left of Conservative opinion. Both of them are intimate friends of Mr. Winston Churchill. But, whereas Boothby picks and chooses the occasions when he will march along the same road, Bracken never deviates from his automatic allegiance. He represents North Paddington, where normally the Conservative should sit in secure comfort, though in 1929, when he was first elected, he won it by a mere five hundred votes.

To-day he is probably dug deeply in and as impregnable as most Members can be.

Although his is a London division none of his constituents has the least excuse for not knowing him. He has a head whose redness proclaims his approach from far away. He has a considerable physique, which seems to indicate that he would enjoy a rough house. He is devoid of admiration for anyone except his mentor; to the rest he presents the front of a political pugilist.

But his interventions are rare, and when they come there is no bravado but plenty of audacious pleasantries. He has a wide knowledge of practical economics; indeed he is managing director of *The Economist*. He has watched the German clutch tighten on Austria and Czechoslovakia. He derided the loans we made to Austria as he seemed to foresee what was coming. To him the German appropriation of the Czechoslovak gold, while the gentlemen who are on the boards both of the Bank of England and of the Bank of International Settlement looked on and took the burglar's orders, was the last word of political futility. And he has said so with great force.

If after all a Churchill government, against which there is such a massive multitude of obstacles, ever comes about, Brendan Bracken will be certain of an office—if he wants one. Stanley Baldwin scored one of his sudden and surprising hits when, during the early days of the Indian controversy he described Churchill and Bracken as "My Right Honourable Friend, the Member for Epping, with his faithful *chela* from North Paddington." Do you know what a *chela* is? If you do not yet know I do not intend

to deprive you of the pleasure of finding out for yourself. Whatever its meaning, this reference to Kipling sounded appropriate and caused a great laugh. So Mr. Baldwin must have been pleased.

Mr. Eden, like Mr. Churchill, has someone who stands by him through all vicissitudes. He is Mr. J. P. L. Thomas, the Conservative Member for Hereford. The relation he and Mr. Bracken bear respectively to Mr. Eden and Mr. Churchill is too personal to be called part of a "following." It is the tie of absolute loyalty which no stresses should succeed in severing.

He is the consummate "gentleman's gentleman" and probably a great deal more. He has had a diverting variety of chiefs. Before entering the House in 1931 he was one of Baldwin's secretaries. Within a year of his election another Jim Thomas—the Right Honourable J. H.—appointed him his Parliamentary Private Secretary. In this position no doubt he felt the acutest strain imposed upon his discretion. Who would not love to reveal the latest carefully designed solecism of the Railway Leader turned Tory?

He uncled him during his adventures as Dominions Secretary till his final unfortunate deflation. If one had been a Cabinet Minister, had inadvertently spilled some important beans before the Chancellor's Budget Speech, had had the blame judicially fixed upon one, and had then had to end a romantic political career with a heart-breaking speech of resignation, few young men could usher one out of public life with such a delicate tact as Mr. J. P. L. Thomas.

Mr. Eden must have had a premonition of his own exit, for he commandeered Jim Thomas forthwith. But when Eden resigned there was this difference, that he had at least the appearance and perhaps the reality of just dealing on his side. That ended, for the time being, Mr. J. P. L. Thomas's fairy-fingered quasi-official activities. For years he had been a busy smoother down of ruffled sensibilities. Now came his chance to indulge his playful fancies and frolicsome criticisms. So, report has it, he behaves to the other Edenites, but always with a knowledge of how far he may properly go.

One day perhaps he will write a volume of memoirs. They should have the qualities which no memoirs can omit with success—entertainment and variety. For nine years this gentle quick-witted iconoclast has moved busily among the affairs of three of the most significant of contemporary personalities. Being suddenly released from the bonds of secrecy he shows the world what makes an ideal Parliamentary Private Secretary, deportment, cheerfulness, ability, good fellowship. When they are carrying out their duties they have to reserve this last in its fulness for a more or less harassed chief, and there is little chance to show the third. So, when suddenly given office, they surprise their fellows by their adequacy. But after the revelations of the last few months no one would be astonished at Jim Thomas's successful entry into the ranks of Ministers of the Crown.

I am surprised to find that Mr. Vyvyan Adams, having been, according to *Who's Who*, born in 1900, cannot accurately be called the quinquagenarian he

rejoices in seeming to be. A grey thatch and an earnest face give him the semblance of considerable age and a measure of wisdom. Though, physically as well as mentally, he moves with brisk inconsequence from point to point, his bodily outline suggests that he has spent years of intellectual application poring over the duller classical authors. But meet him or hear him speak and you will credit him with an immaturity and a sensitive credulity which are proper in a very young and inexperienced man. He seems dissatisfied with the whole world and presumes to exploit to the very limit of official toleration the amazing latitude permitted in the Tory Party. He gaily expects the world to conform with his own Whiggish design and is taken by surprise when both he and his transitory fancies are annihilated by a clever retort or an oblique interjection. Occasionally he himself produces with laborious art a brilliant phrase or a witty comment. But his objectives suffer by reason of an obstinate determination which makes him elevate his ideas to a remote pinnacle and deters others from readily co-operating.

Examine his seat and its record and you may find the explanation of his tireless displays of individuality. It had a long Liberal tradition till sixteen years ago when it was won by Labour. If he represented a safe Conservative constituency, could his orthodoxy be so admirably suspect? Perhaps in those circumstances he would not go to such elaborate lengths to convince his constituents that a Conservative can behave liberally and that he is doing his best to be an industrious legislator. Whether the electors of West Leeds approve of his daring behaviour and really like

to be represented by one who exhibits so absolute a loyalty to Burke's notions of independence can only be proved when another election comes along. But he seems so sure of his own rectitude that he would hotly resent the imputation that his political life was inspired by anything but the sincerest idealism.

Enough has already been written to prove that a young Conservative does not automatically veer to the left. "Progressive thought" would to-day be hard of definition, but it seems to embrace an impatience of social injustice and a suspicion of the words of perjured dictators. Youth is comparatively plentiful in the Conservative Party but much of it is enthusiastic to support Chamberlain in giving the dictators every chance to run straight, even to the risk of first-class interests, and is reluctant to exaggerate the badness of social conditions. Indeed could an avowed young anti-Chamberlain Conservative to-day expect adoption in any by-election? While the defences are raised and comparisons are made with supposedly far worse conditions a century ago slums go on propagating more fleas and bigger bugs. But there is always plenty of scope left for emphasis on palpable improvement.

A perfect instrument of official apology is the Member for Oxford, Mr. Quintin Hogg. He has a hundred natural advantages. He is the son of Lord Hailsham, and it is commonly forgotten how near the Sir Douglas Hogg of 1925 came to the leadership of the Conservative Party. At one moment in 1923 Stanley Baldwin regarded his Attorney-General as one of the few good Ministerial speakers of the indifferent team he had to lead.

A clear and expressive mind almost exactly reproducing his father's has been transmitted to Quintin Hogg. Already his usefulness is manifest to the Government. He can make a thoroughly efficient speech without a single note but with the pointed precision of a practised lawyer.

It is almost tiresome to record that here is yet another ex-President of the Oxford Union. He is a scholar of Eton and of Christ Church; a double first and a Fellow of All Souls. "That will be all for the present, thank you." He represents Oxford in several capacities. During the by-election which so quickly followed the Munich Agreement when this very young man was pitted against the Master of Balliol some undergraduates who had intruded into this affair of the City coined the slogan "Oxford wants Lindsay: Hitler wants Hogg." Oxford got Hogg, though it is perhaps a tribute to his powers of advocacy that, if ever Hitler has to undergo the trial with which Kaiser Wilhelm II was once threatened, he might try—but he would try in vain—to retain Quintin Hogg.

There he is, marked out for work as a Law Officer at an early date. The power of heredity in this case is almost overwhelming. The Pickwickian posture, the loose movement of the arms, the meticulous enunciation, the assurance of being correct, the clarity of tone, the sense of clean integrity and the countless tokens of industry—all are there to convince the authorities that here is a replica of Douglas Hogg; an acquisition whom they must use and use to his profit and their own recurrent advantage.

But Quintin Hogg will have to maintain his present

high level of diligence for at his back will be a still younger rival. A few months before Oxford City adopted him either for life or until the House of Lords summons him into the twilight of politics an astonishing by-election happened at Stafford. Mr. Ormsby-Gore became Lord Harlech on the death of his father, and the local Conservative Association had the unusual vision to adopt a newly wed barrister of twenty-nine, Mr. Thorneycroft. The honeymoon campaign combined with the candidate's ideal personal endowments yielded in Stafford the almost unprecedented result of an increase in the majority of a party which had been in office for *nearly three years*. You may search and search and you will have difficulty in discovering a comparable achievement.

Mr. Ormsby-Gore was the most agreeable of Members. There could have been no relieved reaction from a Trappist, a snob or a nonentity. The explanations must be sought in Mr. Thorneycroft's own qualities. What then are these attributes which make the perfect candidate?

Thorneycroft is friendly without seeming insincere; readily amused but not vacant. He is objective without being priggish. His neat good looks lack the excesses of elegance. His conversation is clear but not dogmatic. He observes the conventions but avoids formality. He defers to the elderly and fraternizes with contemporaries. Above all he is an excellent speaker, substantial but not provocative. Make him Solicitor-General to-morrow and after an attractive stumble or two he would do the job to the general satisfaction.

So if you want to set up an electoral record, to

demonstrate that, however violently the pendulum may swing and however slab-like the caprices of democracy, you at all events are a sufficiently positive being to rise in triumphant superiority to these secular handicaps, acquire the manners and the mind of Thorneycroft and then marry a wife of sense and charm. The formula is not a very easy one. Too many eligible young men are amiable but stupid, or wealthy but arrogant, or good-looking but addled.

Nobody can yet tell whether he has the other qualities which are necessary for political success. While it is already known that he will look all problems "fairly and squarely in the face," has he the courage, having diagnosed them and prescribed a difficult remedy, to avoid "passing on"? What is behind his brown eyes and infectious smile? Has he the stamina to wait and to work? There is no evidence to indicate that he lacks it. So the only advice that can be given to political speculators is "Watch Thorneycroft."

Only two years his senior is Mr. Ronald Cartland who, through the interventions of Mr. Thorneycroft, Mr. de Chair and Mr. Charles Wood, is now three places removed from being the youngest Conservative Member. Mr. Charles Wood, having been born in 1912, is almost a War baby. Although he shares with the Prime Minister in the representation of Birmingham, Cartland is forthright, outspoken and critical. But Mr. Amery is there too, so Cartland is not so personally isolated as a few years ago Mr. Amery would have wished Great Britain to be politically.

You may have heard him broadcasting his comments on "The Week at Westminster." The rather formidable task of putting life into the extinct body of questions and debates is performed by him as freshly as it can reasonably be done. He is a vital young man, sharp of feature and acute of mind, so far to the left of the Conservatives that he must find it hard, when electioneering, to disagree with his hecklers or to attack his adversaries.

He tilts at two vulnerable points in his leader's armour—foreign policy and the Special Areas. One day, when he becomes significant enough for some champion to be deputed to destroy him, he may be thrown and break his lance. But, if his buoyancy is as natural as it seems, he will rebound from the arena and come up smiling. He and Sandys sit alongside. Their modified enthusiasm for various items of Government policy are obvious from the gallery. In that most public of all places, the Chamber of the House of Commons, a word or a silence, a wink or a grin, has often an ominous meaning. They sit with precocious and preternatural solemnity while the cheering for Neville Chamberlain reverberates all around them. But it would appear that, whereas Sandys has succeeded in stirring antagonisms, Cartland is too engaging to incur them. Are we then to conclude that he is a comparative nonentity, a fragment of thistledown hovering beside a plaguy wasp? I think not. The democratic cheers which hailed his description in the House of a performance by the Prime Minister as "a jeering, pettifogging, party speech" stand a good chance of drowning the outraged rebukes of the Chairman of the Birmingham

Conservative Party, Sir Patrick Hannon, M.P. It is hardly Cartland's fault if he is too pleasant to embitter those who disapprove of his frequent heterodoxies.

A celestial view of the Chamber of the House of Commons reveals that it may contain a leaven of senile mediocrity, but it is also studded, anyhow on the Government side, with the talent of youth. A number have been subjected to sketching, but not, I hope, to caricature. But there are plenty more where they came from. I might have mentioned W. W. Wakefield, a superb propeller of the Rugby football who, though over forty, is as youthful in muscle as Harold Nicolson in mind.

Aged thirty-six is Mr. Perkins, already a Member with more than eight years' seniority, an expert on the air who many have said has been officially overlooked on account of his too penetrating criticisms of our civil aviation. Another born in the same year is Colonel Harvie Watt, a masculine red-haired Scotsman, already a Whip, and therefore destined to be shown the plums to pick.

There is Mr. de Chair, uneasily conscious of his own inexperience, but yet with enough self-assurance at the age of twenty-eight to assert a strong loyalty to Mr. Chamberlain. Take a sharp turn to the left and you will find Mr. Pilkington, not yet at ease in the House (who ever is perfectly so?) but full of thought and patriotism. Nor must Mr. Godfrey Nicholson be omitted, who so earnestly strives to carry out what seems to him to be right.

Some of these comments savour of obituary notices.

Does a man lose his soul by becoming a party politician? Only, I think, if he is held in thrall by his party. If the people of Great Britain are content to experience two decades more of the ascendancy of the Right, with only intermittent and incompetent explosions of Leftist administration by old men whose minds and movements are threatened with paralysis, there is statistically a long procession of the young who are ready and qualified to maintain the King's Government.

Why are they nearly all on the Right? Economic reasons are potent, but they are not the whole explanation. It is only the young men who have had that education which Labour is so anxious to spread in deep layers across the whole community who are really fitted for Parliament before the age of thirty. But in the Labour Party such men are not preferred to the warriors of the Trade Unions. They are rejected with the epithet "noisy intellectuals." Thus does Labour insist on keeping its own future as barren as the Sahara and as bleak as a December on the North Sea.

XI

MR. OLIVER STANLEY

WE in Great Britain make a legitimate boast of furnishing the world with the model of Parliamentary Government. Without nice scruples about the perfect accuracy of our language we proceed to add that we have evolved a complete democracy. I suppose "complete democracy" would mean that a majority of adult citizens would be sovereign upon all the minutest issues of legislation; that its vote would decide everything from the tax on cigarettes to the pattern of policemen's uniforms. Two consequences might be the end of all revenue and the seasonal equipment of "the finest police force in the world" with the colours of the champion professional football team, always assuming that democracy allowed that force to survive and could go on paying for its maintenance. So I could only pray "heaven preserve me from absolute democracy."

What we have done after many years' hesitations and centuries of trial and error, is to found our system of government upon Parliamentary representation. But both a government and a Parliament may persist long after they have sickened the public by their blunders or inertia. And even a government to which the electorate assign a fresh lease of life does wilfully



MR OLIVER STANLEY

*"Now the Honourable Member
has spoilt my peroration."*

or unavoidably a score of things any one of which would be repudiated at a referendum.

"But," you will say, "men are elected to support an executive. We elect men, we do not pass measures. Our choice of the Members is absolutely free and unprejudiced." That again is not true. Certain families with a tradition of government have a prescriptive claim to office. Chatsworth, Hatfield, Knowsley—Cavendish, Cecil, Stanley—these places and these names still dilate upon the canvas on which is pictured the Government of Britain. The feudal aristocracy has made itself thoroughly popular and has preserved the greater part of its privilege. The English—and the Scottish—will heed the scion of a noble house. If he exhibits any signs of sense they will hang on his words. And if he has more than average wisdom they will spontaneously look to him to lead and to govern.

This predisposition is not restricted to the Conservative Party. The writer has often heard normal working-class Socialists refer without any rancour, indeed almost with regret, to "those who govern us." There is an accepted governing class. It consists of the peerage and their immediate relatives. If that is a snobbish assertion, truth must be a snob. A perfect example of our democratized aristocracy is Oliver Stanley, the only surviving son of the seventeenth Earl of Derby.

His electoral progress has been as smooth as his tongue. It is true that in 1923, aged twenty-seven, he fought and lost the Edgehill Division of Liverpool. He must have had an uncomfortable contest. He and his family are Free Traders by tradition, and Baldwin

was making his first ill-conceived and absent-minded attempt to obtain a mandate for Protection. Even the local rallying-cry of "Stanley" could not carry to victory a young man who may have been contending in conflict with his own convictions and simultaneously trying to withstand the flowing tide. He was not to be troubled in this way again. Next year he was shown into the Conservative seat of Westmorland where no contest had occurred since the War. He polled between two and three to one and once since his original election he has enjoyed an unopposed return. He and Lady Maureen, his wife, a daughter of Lord Londonderry, have a house in that neighbourhood of sky and mere and mountainside.

His Ministerial history has not been so unruffled, though his advance to the Front Bench had about it the quality of smooth inevitability. They could not promote him at once, but he and his friends soon found that he had an ideal manner for the House of Commons. By 1931 he was, on the three grounds of forensic artfulness, personal probity and lordly connexions, marked out for some office or other. He was made Under-Secretary to the Home Office.

It was an excellent choice. No one could yet say that his entry into the Ministry was the consequence of nepotism. Indeed the depth of feeling which apparently informed him, as well as a brain that was as modestly intellectual as it was undeniably intelligent, went far towards vindicating the Englishman's love for aristocracy. He had little to do directly with the treatment of violent criminals; that was the function of his chief, Sir Herbert Samuel. But Oliver Stanley did his work so acceptably that it would almost have

seemed a privilege to have had one's reprieve refused by him. Indeed he was not in the least overshadowed by his distinguished principal Minister. To-day he is often said to be one of the six best brains in the House of Commons.

One of his earlier tasks was to introduce a bill which was to regularize the opening of cinemas on Sundays. He made a speech which was loudly applauded and long remembered. The topic was highly controversial. For years the letter of the law had been broken, but the opponents of Sunday entertainments saw this moment as an opportunity to revive the rigours of the Lord's Day Observance Act. Not only did they have on their side a weight of influential advocacy including the Attorney-General, Sir Thomas Inskip, but the Free Churches and Evangelicals deluged Members with floods of propaganda. It had not been fully appreciated that each locality would be free to make its own choice. For half a dozen years this form of local option has worked quite satisfactorily.

Oliver Stanley skilfully pointed to the varying needs of different localities—Westmorland and Westminster—fell and back street. His speech was a cunning blend of history and argument, and his peroration was a marvel of tact and common sense. Advocates of Sunday opening in the many great centres where cinemas are still shut on Sundays might incorporate it into their propaganda.

"To me and to most Members a quiet Sunday at home means comfortable surroundings, complete privacy, every aid to intellectual enjoyment. . . . But are there not many thousands of people in this country

to whom the Sunday at home . . . may mean a continuance of the terrible intimacy of overcrowded houses, of the round of household drudgery from which we are exempt, of the drab surroundings which they see every day of their lives, and to whom a visit to the cinema, however meretricious it may be, means at least privacy, warmth, colour, life; and if those people go to the cinema on Sunday evening, I, for one, will not admit that Christianity condemns their action until I am sure that Christianity approves their conditions."

So Oliver took the House to Church more gently and more firmly than any of his opponents. His final epigram may actually have affected a few waverers, as the question was left to a free vote. There is much in him to suggest the super-curate. It would be a charming experience for an imp to wave his wand above his thick white hair and array him in the black cloth, black stock and reversed collar of the ministry. Oliver Stanley would both look and sound the part.

I do not know what is his response to pornographic stories. But it is as hard to think of his being tested by bawdry as to imagine him letting it fall. It would be as indecently anomalous as kicking a football along the aisle of a church. There is a veil drawn between him and ordinary men; he would not make a helpful audience to the Rabelaisian. But though he has this healthy power of inhibition which is commonly ascribed to the best parsons, many bishops and more priests would envy him his wit. When he has the chance carefully to prepare his speeches they bristle with epigram and happy phrase. These are all woven unaffectedly into the texture of his argument. He is a

redoubtable Minister for critics to cross-examine at question time. He can be trusted to turn the laugh against the heckler.

The Opposition like him. He is entertaining and never initiates a quarrel. He seems merciful and humanitarian and enjoys laughing at himself. Once he had delivered an amusing speech exchanging jests with the Labour Party and keeping his hearers in the kind of pleasant suspense that wonders "What is coming next?" He was preparing to end with a few serious sentences. A Labour Member made a good-natured but irrelevant interruption. Instead of showing irritation Oliver Stanley beamed all over his face as he complained "Now the Honourable Member has spoilt my peroration!" Everyone laughed with the speaker for it is impossible to hate such an agreeable man.

He can give and take with the best. On one occasion, when he was referring to Mr. Lloyd George's schemes for relieving unemployment and reviving industry, he called them "The New Deal from the Old Dealer." Lloyd George looked as pleased as if he had himself been the author of the phrase. His reputation for neatness of expression is so great that his hearers will endure long seconds of stumbling and halting during his more extemporaneous speeches while Oliver's mind goes on its diligent search for the right set of words. At last it is coming. He leans from his considerable height over the box with his hands on either side of it. His body sways forwards and backwards to the rhythm of his time-spending monosyllabic grunts. It must be nearly with us, for one hand has left its station and its long fore-finger

has thrust back his spectacles on to the bridge of his nose the better, so it seems, for him to view the effect on his audience. Out it comes and its quality shows that one was right to wait patiently for it. All who can hear it are put in an excellent temper and settle down to wait for the next conceit.

But do these clever frivolities and earnest intensities betoken a really successful statesman, or a great man, or even a happy one? Behind him there is a lengthening avenue of ministerial experience, before him seems to stretch a yet longer vista of public service. Birth will never remove him to the Lords. Lord Stanley's young son became Lord Derby's heir after his father's untimely death. Edward Stanley was a gentle man—whether the words are held apart or run together—whose serious talents were dimmed by an abnormal degree of deafness, but he lacked his brother's distinction of intellect. Oliver Stanley is too useful a fighting craft, whether in office or in opposition, to be allowed to escape to the serener waters of the Lords by any separate ennoblement. Only some first-class official catastrophe could entitle him to take the Viscounty to which as a former Cabinet Minister he could theoretically lay claim.

Since 1933 he has been in turn Minister of Transport, Minister of Labour, President of the Board of Education and President of the Board of Trade. He is forty-three. His misfortunes at the Ministry of Labour, a notorious political death-trap, would have destroyed most other men. At the end of January 1935 certain regulations had been made by the Unemployment Assistance Board by which the rates of assistance paid to the unemployed were raised in

some cases and lowered in others. The new determinations were violently resented in certain centres and in Sheffield something approaching a riot broke out. Oliver Stanley had the humiliating task of so amending the regulations a week after Parliament had approved them that the new determinations were to stand where they were higher than the old and that the old were to be restored where any reduction had been made. This complete, though doubtless humane, capitulation he announced in the sympathetic tones of which he is the perfect master. "When you are dealing not with inanimate things but with men and women, then feelings of dignity or pride ought not to stand in the way of most prompt and effective action."

A lady who heard this announcement said it was one of the most moving things she had witnessed. Nevertheless politicians with less vulnerable emotions speculated "Is Oliver going to resign?" As feelings were rising during the discussion a Labour Member interjected "*He's* all right. *He's* a Stanley!" In June of the same year he moved technically upwards but practically sideways to the Board of Education. His successor, Mr. Ernest Brown, did not make the same mistake. When asked when the new regulations would be established he delivered an answer which became a by-word—"Next spring at the earliest." But his circumspection was justified. He avoided a winter revision and any hasty decision. So he kept himself and his office from filling the pit into which Oliver had been cast by unkindly circumstance.

Oliver Stanley's academic reputation was an appropriate adornment of the Board of Education. Here he

presided till Neville Chamberlain succeeded Baldwin in May 1937. He was then advanced to be President of the Board of Trade where under a protectionist Prime Minister he has had the ironical duty of working on a basis that defies his Free Trade antecedents. He is said to have been one of the more intransigent elements when Chamberlain's original notions of conducting foreign policy were being put into practice. Indeed at the time of Munich lively rumours were associating him with Duff Cooper. But he stayed on to see the policy which he publicly supported ruined and reversed.

Anything distinguished may be born to an Earl of Derby. The House of Stanley has been serving the State for five centuries in a host of different capacities. If you feel some surprise as you regard the lean parsonic figure of Oliver Stanley beside the huge bulk of the seventeenth Earl of Derby, who more readily than anyone else suggests to the public mind the Jockey Club and all it means, control your surprise. Lord Derby held office under Salisbury and Balfour, was Secretary of State for War during the last two years of the European War, was then our Ambassador to France for two more years and finally went back to the War Office for a year under Bonar Law and Baldwin. Oliver Stanley is not only his son; he is also the great-grandson of one of the most eminent Prime Ministers of the Golden Age of English statesmanship. The present Lord Derby may seem too solid to beget any brilliance. But brilliance runs in the stock. The fourteenth Earl was not only Prime Minister but a great scholar; he also won for himself the designation "Rupert of debate." Whatever his

performance Oliver has been well sired. So when he scintillates he is simply running somewhat truer to form than some of his father's entries for the Derby.

Will Oliver prove a stayer? That is one of the liveliest of political questions. Though he is an ideal performer in a House of Commons that admires righteousness shot through with wit there is some doubt whether he could raise a large mixed audience on to their feet at a General Election. He is not tough, he is not hearty, there are doubts about his tenacity, and he has certainly not got the leathery hide required by all supremely successful politicians.

By a pretty freak of fortune it fell to his lot as President of the Board of Trade to decide whether the Buchmanites were to be allowed to be registered under the extremely profitable title "Oxford Group." No doubt the net has in time past been cunningly deployed to embrace Oliver. Could a youngish Old Etonian President of the Board of Trade, the son of a seventeenth Earl, remain unsolicited by these assiduous missionaries among the middle and upper classes? But I know of no evidence to support a suggestion that Oliver has himself succumbed. For one thing he is in no manifest need of being "changed," though, for all I know, it may be the purpose of the Buchmanites to make everyone more simple-minded. Oliver Stanley would be a superb catch, but the imagination shrinks away from the spectacle of his fancying some private guilt and then publicly sharing it with a huddle of rapt colleagues. His decision is certainly the result of his own sense of what is right and not jealousy for the reputation of the glories of Oxford in which he undoubtedly enjoys a full share.

I would give a great deal to be concealed under the table around which a Cabinet containing him was sitting bent on some big decision. His own contributions would, I am sure, be wise and witty. He would lay much more stress upon principle than upon expediency. There would be no hint of doctrinaire inflexibility in his attitude. He would give a splendid display of sweet reasonableness. But can I see him letting any passion he felt take possession of him and cause him to bang the table and threaten resignation? No; still less can he be imagined resigning. The hereditary habit of governing must be too strong with him. But he is young yet.

So young is he and so far has he already progressed that he is bound some day to be a serious candidate for the Tory leadership. *A priori* few developments could be more seemly. Indeed he has shown that he possesses every qualification except the capacity to be stubborn, ruthless, and resolute. A Prime Minister has to endure blasts of criticism, caprice and hostility far more powerful and more icy than the breezes that buffet lesser men. Could Oliver throw out his chest, gather strength from deep breathing and march ahead? Or would he yield to the fatal temptation to wrap around him the ample garments he had inherited and stay still save for the shivers that convulsed him?

XII

MR. HORE-BELISHA

WHATEVER further distinctions lie ahead of him the Right Honourable Leslie Hore-Belisha will be remembered as the Secretary of State for War who had ready in the autumn of 1939 an army far greater, both in actual strength and in the capacity for rapid expansion, than General French's Contemptible Little Army. He will be celebrated as the man who, in disregard of the claims of seniority, appointed Lord Gort to the position of Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

These are high services for a youngish man of forty-six to have rendered the Realm. They indicate decisiveness, boldness and self-confidence. Certainly Mr. Hore-Belisha has already done enough to remain a specially significant figure on the long scroll of our Secretaries of State for War. But before he held that office his earlier activities had everywhere made his name a household word.

Indeed Hore-Belisha's name has long been "news." Its owner has a certain faculty for publicizing himself. It is a striking articulation, exotic to English eyes and ears. Without any stable information, I should say that it would be safer to pronounce the second syllable of the second portion to rhyme with "me" and not "I." Clever people have suggested that the hyphen should be advanced a single letter so that Mount Horeb and

the Prophet Elisha might be properly celebrated by a famous name. A little research will prove that there is no contemporary warranty for this attractive emendation. Leslie was born in 1893 to Mr. and Mrs. J. I. Belisha. In 1912 his mother married a second time. Her second husband, only nineteen years older than his stepson, was Sir Adair Hore, who in 1935 became permanent secretary to the Ministry of Pensions. Mr. Hore-Belisha's mother, who had thus become Lady Hore, died in 1936; he was a devoted son and felt the bereavement bitterly. That is the whole story of his name. So, as a judge might say, let us hear no more nonsense about "Horeb-Elisha."

The boy was sent to Clifton. The First German War came and interrupted his career. But for him it was not an unqualified misfortune. When hostilities ended he had at the age of twenty-five reached Field rank. Major Hore-Belisha resumed his interrupted career at St. John's College, Oxford. "Here is a winner," said an undergraduate population consisting of schoolboys and warriors, and made him forthwith President of the Union. Hore-Belisha decided that he was a Liberal; so he was, a Liberal with a belief in empiricism, a faith in the power of the individual and a contempt for the soft cushions of Socialism. He was called to the Bar but did not let the Temple separate him from Fleet Street. During his experience of journalism he made a number of valuable contacts. These were not transitory. Of all politicians he has least ground for complaining that the Press has ever ignored him or his exploits.

By 1922 he was nominated as Liberal candidate for



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the Defence Division of Devonport. Plymouth Hoe and Naval Dockyard—these romantic sites were direct stimuli to his aptitude for rhetoric. Superficially this division did not seem a very promising field for an academic Liberal. But Hore-Belisha was something more. He has always had an uncanny perception of what his public wants. Although he did not win his fight in 1922 he did astonishingly well; he was a good second to the sitting Conservative Member. In 1923 every circumstance conspired to help him. The Liberal rupture was healed, temporarily as it turned out, but adequately for his immediate purpose. He could fight under the joint leadership of two former Prime Ministers. Lloyd George saw and appreciated his worth and so Leslie has never had to endure the shafts of that most formidable of critics. Perhaps Mr. Lloyd George has preferred to hit men of his own political stature; more likely he has been held back by the claims of an abiding friendship, for he can be spectator as well as warrior. Even though Leslie Hore-Belisha has strayed from the fold that they once inhabited together Mr. Lloyd George cannot withhold his satisfaction at the progress of the young man he helped to discover.

During his first contest Hore-Belisha was assisted by a mistake his Conservative opponent was alleged to have made. He charged Sir Clement Kinloch-Cooke with attacking him on the ground that he was too young to sit in Parliament. If this stricture was ever made it was most indiscreet, for it gave Hore-Belisha the kind of opportunity on which he thrives. He was twenty-nine, so he compared himself with a series of great historical figures who had done tre-

mendous deeds at an early age. He reminded his audience of his youth and recalled how much others had achieved before they had attained his age. He fashioned a purple passage in which he said he was "older than Pitt when he became the first Minister of the Crown, a little younger than Wolfe when he scaled the Heights of Abraham." Thrills and applause animated the audience of the young spell-binder. So, marking his success like a good actor, he repeated this patch of eloquence whenever and wherever an opportunity arose.

Hore-Belisha maintained this level of rhetoric when the tide was flowing his way. The qualities of the retiring Member could not twice withstand such brilliant electioneering. By a substantial majority for 1923, when the electorate was much smaller and margins were habitually more narrow, "the Major," as the electors of Devonport grew to call him, was returned at the head of the poll. Since that date he has taken good care to strengthen his local grip. Devonport has enjoyed being represented by a man who, whatever else may be said about him, cannot be dismissed as a nonentity.

He early learned every trick of the politicians' trade—how to greet, how to accept congratulations, to whom to be deferential, when to conciliate, when to hit—above all, though he was merely perfecting an instrument already acute, how to debate. He suffered neither from diffidence nor from false modesty.

Within the Liberal Party he saw to it that he made his presence felt. His survival of his Party's crash at the election of 1924 gave him the immense advantage of uninterrupted experience in Parliament. On that

occasion his majority fell to a mere half thousand. In 1929 it swelled to nearly five thousand. At the last two elections he has polled more than two to one. In this particular instance personality—so widely blazoned by publicity—has certainly counted electorally.

He is happy in politics, and happiness facilitates industry. "Handy with his tongue," as he has been epigrammatically described, he has not relied on the spur of the moment when the course of the skirmish could be foreseen. He has been known to work for hours to prepare the best possible presentation of an apparently trivial point. Until 1931 he enjoyed the exhilaration of continuous opposition. When the Tories were in power he could speak as a Liberal. During the two periods of Labour Administration, still as a Liberal, he could play the gadfly and sting with his extemporaneous or well-fashioned satire the second-rate Socialist Ministers. His wit and ingenious insolence became famous. He was not even beyond bickering with some of the senior members of his own party. During the whole of this rollicking period he remained the smart-tongued intellectually adolescent President of the Oxford Union.

By 1931 he had eight years' parliamentary experience behind him. He saw in the collapse of Labour the great opportunity. Between the most prominent among the severest Liberal critics of the Government and the other political heads he acted as a kind of messenger. His friends in Fleet Street were careful to make known the part he had taken in the formation of the National Government. His brains were to be rewarded, his ambition was to be, if not sated, at least

pleasantly whetted. After the election he was given an office where his Liberal career would be useful during the retreat from Free Imports. He was made Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade while Mr. Walter Runciman, another Liberal National, became President.

At once Hore-Belisha showed a Churchillian ability to make any office with which he was associated assume an importance which was not necessarily proportionate to its true significance. He could now choose his ground more profitably than ever, so he redoubled the diligence he bestowed on his parliamentary preparations. One of his targets was now the section of Liberals who still believed in the historic principle of Free Trade. He was once replying to a debate on our Trade position. He tricked out statistics in a most attractive manner, pointed to the benefits which Protection was yielding, and concluded his argument by bringing his fist down on the box and declaring "an ounce of practice is worth a ton of principle!" In this single phrase Hore-Belisha condensed his own political philosophy.

He was too good for his job. Within twelve months the same Ramsay MacDonald whom he had badgered so satirically promoted him to be Financial Secretary to the Treasury. In this office his new chief was Neville Chamberlain; his work could be observed at the closest range by the most powerful individual next to Stanley Baldwin.

The period during which he achieved the zenith of his notoriety—Belisha's golden age—began in June 1934 when he was put in charge of the Ministry of Transport. His idea of tackling road accidents

was to sanction the embellishment of the highways with the beacons that bear his name. No one can say with certainty whether these peculiar emblems reduced the scandal of fatalities. They and the other simultaneous regulations certainly did one thing which can hardly have failed to gratify the new Minister of Transport—however little he may have done to conceive the idea, the Belisha beacons made the name of the new Disraeli familiar in every household in Great Britain. “Daddy, why have these things got such a funny name?” “Because, my child, they are named after our dear Minister of Transport, who has invented them to protect your precious life.” Had Oliver Stanley’s transfer to the Ministry of Labour been postponed for a few weeks the Belisha beacons would no doubt have had to be content with the rather less outlandish title of “Stanley standard.”

The Ministry grew in prestige and Leslie grew with it. Mr. Baldwin was sufficiently moved by his work and his wit to promote him to the Cabinet in October 1936. And then in May 1937 he was given by Neville Chamberlain the great office of Secretary of State for War. At once he began to re-arrange our military furniture. New methods of attracting recruits were evolved. Life in the Army was made more attractive and the medical tests on enlistment were made less pedantic and more realistic. Major Hore-Belisha was to show his supreme authority in more serious ways. He shook up the General Staff, removing some officers and promoting others. To some gallant gentlemen he gave notice as summary as it was sudden. Lord Gort’s standing and proved bravery fascinated the Major, who raised him to be Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

He was sent on a courtesy visit to Italy and they whispered that for Britain to send a Jew to Mussolini was a delicate method of mortifying Hitler. But this visit did not discourage the Duce from persisting in his attack on the Republic of Spain or from officially introducing Anti-Semitism at a later date. To Hore-Belisha fell the task of explaining away the batteries that were said to be menacing Gibraltar. This task he did not seem to relish, for even from the gallery his smile was noticeably more apologetic and expansive than usual.

But this passing problem—or what he no doubt wanted to treat as a passing problem—was quite insignificant beside his part during the summer of 1938 in the controversy set in motion by the energies of Mr. Duncan Sandys. That commotion has been dealt with in another context. The Secretary of State for War may have contributed to the storm by his zeal for his own authority. It was the first time that his interesting personality suffered jar or jolt. Until the various inquiries began their more or less protracted deliberations Belisha's ill-wishers were discussing the possibility of his resignation. For the first time since he had held office the rising statesman began to feel his neck. But he lived through an anxious period, and so came to present the Army Estimates for 1939.

For the first time since November 1918 the House heard that we were to be committed in certain circumstances to sending an expeditionary force abroad. Winston Churchill described this policy as part of the bill we were paying for Munich. Military matters moved apace. The Territorial Army was increased

and then doubled in total strength. We scattered guarantees over Eastern Europe. By the end of April Chamberlain announced compulsory military service. Upon Hore-Belisha fell the main departmental burden. He wound up the debate with a great Parliamentary triumph working his best trick to perfection: he quoted against him a passage which Sir Archibald Sinclair had delivered only a few days before. On a good wicket Mr. Hore-Belisha can be relied upon to score a century.

This captivating record compels an admiration for the smartness of our Secretary of State for War. He has done all in his power to "get on." He has made a study of the whole public and of the several diverse sections of it, whose favour he has to woo. He knows the House of Commons will appreciate cleverness if it is sustained by industry and knowledge. Accordingly as a Parliamentarian he decides how he will be clever after he has diligently amassed the necessary facts. He is aware that woolliness is fatal, so he argues deliberately in a clear if slightly rasping voice. He seems to have thought out in advance the pitch and emphasis most suitable for every one of his sentences. In the House he is sparing of rhetoric, but on the platform he is far more prone to it.

Though he is still nominally a Liberal, Hore-Belisha is supposed to be modelling himself on Disraeli. The parallel is by no means complete. With Hore-Belisha there was no dismal or ludicrous anti-climax to any extravagantly ambitious first attempt to storm Westminster. Hore-Belisha has found other ways of self-advertisement than oriental curls and prodigality of attire. His manner may be faintly flamboyant but

his dress is quiet and free from ostentation. He is too clever to betray the grosser vulgarities into which some members of his great race have been known to lapse. He is an obvious Jew with his curly locks and curvature of profile. But he does little to justify Anti-Semitism and it is a severe criticism of our days that these matters have to be mentioned at all.

A process of elimination has made many Conservatives ready to toy with the notion of his becoming their leader. But almost as many do not forget that he is really a guest in a strange Government: he was not always the loyal henchman of a Conservative Prime Minister and many of his earliest sallies were directed against the things for which they stand. At times, however, he has allowed principle to expose him to the criticism that he cannot swallow every decision of his colleagues wholesale. When the House of Commons was asked to ratify a policy for Palestine by which the Arabs should after five years be able to decide whether any more Jews could immigrate into their own National Home, he was absent from the vote. One would have thought that it would not be necessary for the Press to treat this mild and passive resistance as a breach of Cabinet discipline. Would these critics have admired him more if he had positively supported what no Jew could possibly acclaim? The fact that his own position was secure did not cause him to forget the senseless tribulations of others.

But these evidences of feeling have been sought for somewhat arduously in the composition of Mr. Hore-Belisha. The dominant impression he makes is of a man astute to the point of hardness, to whom politics is a pursuit to be followed with all his heart and all

his mind, a game in fact, even though it may be a deadly serious game, fit only for the consummately trained professional. He is afraid that a detail may paralyse a movement. When the Simonite Liberals became junior partners in the National Government he was deeply concerned that they should find the most attractive possible name. "Liberal National" may well be his own invention. And assuredly it is worth a great deal in the country. Any Liberal National candidate can claim the total available Tory support as well as all who are attracted by the word "Liberal," even though after election he will never offend his Conservative allies by word or vote. There are still tens of thousands among the electorate who are unaware that in practice there is not an ounce of difference between Liberal National and unqualified Conservative.

For the attainment of office too it is a great thing to be a Liberal National. In a Cabinet of twenty-three there are two Right Honourable Gentlemen who are called "National Labour" and no less than five Liberal Nationals. But when the moment comes for the selection of a "National" leader a mountainous obstacle will intervene between the Liberal National and his objective. Antecedents and tradition will raise their heads and shout out their protest.

So some of those Conservatives who think that it would be a convenient arrangement for themselves and for him if he were to lead them to a number of resounding triumphs in Parliament and in the constituencies should approach him with the humble petition and advice that he should forthwith become in name what he is in fact—a good Conservative. If he delays making

this move for much longer he may soon find the public reaction less sympathetic than it would be to-day. Meanwhile, before they can follow him as their leader, it is open to his distinguished audiences to admire him as their spokesman. And Leslie Hore-Belisha, who is still three-parts playboy, will, as he brings the House down with his more victorious performances, smile in remotely self-conscious delight. Then he will take care to drop his eyes with pity for his victim and with the modest humility of the well-bred.

XIII

SIR SAMUEL HOARE AND SIR KINGSLEY WOOD

SET these two Right Honourable Gentlemen to run a hundred yards' race and you need have no doubt of the result. Though Sir Kingsley is a little junior in age and considerably younger in mind he could hardly be a match for the spare lean Secretary of State for the Home Department. Sir Samuel, though nearly sixty, still skates with the slim economy of movement which enabled him to represent Oxford University. He has, moreover, a distinguished record as a performer at racquets and lawn tennis; his prominence at Wimbledon ceremonies is a tribute to his personal prowess. He can hardly have acquired an extra pound's weight in the last forty years. All that Sir Kingsley could hope for would be a sudden and unpredictable collapse on the part of his rival. To-day he is plump, rotund and chubby. He is alert and awake, but hardly the man to run a sprint without acute physical distress.

"Here is somebody," you will say as you watch him beaming behind his spectacles, "who is ready for a good joke. Indeed I am sure he will oblige at the slightest provocation." And when in a moment his high-pitched chuckle is audible you are pleased to

see how right you were. It is only the moustache and glasses which distinguish him from an animated version of one of the stone cherubs so popular among Georgian architects.

But Sir Kingsley cannot be thus lightly dismissed. He is one of the ablest of administrators, with a personality so agreeable that he seems to create his own good luck as he marches on. To many he is entertaining: to none is he offensive. Separated from his mental capacities his physique is a subject for comedy. But he has won for himself such renown as a ministerial go-getter that he must to-day be treated by Sir Samuel Hoare as a regrettable competitor in the race for that leadership which Sir Samuel so openly desires. It is possible that neither will come in first. But if they alone were left in the field Sir Kingsley might turn the event into a procession of which he did not form the rearguard.

To Sir Kingsley, then, success is as spontaneous as the floating of a football on a pond. Sir Samuel has to be buoyed up and propelled forward by cork, oars, sails and steam. He gives an impression of intense cerebral labour. That impression cannot be altogether correct as he was a double first at Oxford, so, if he is not by nature a quick thinker, he must have trained his mind to move at a fair speed. He is intensely serious and desperately sensitive. He is the soul of care and caution. His audience listen to his governess-like voice as he reads an answer to a Parliamentary question, or slowly unfolds the argument of an important speech, and while listening feel the strain of his caution. It is another symptom of his ambition. He is taking such immense trouble in order to disarm



SIR SAMUEL HOARE

*"Steady and collective resistance to
all acts of unprovoked aggression."*

damaging criticism. He is laboriously laying down the road for his own progress. Before we dissect further let us notice his features. Wide-open eyes peer at the future in questioning bewilderment. His eyebrows suggest a vast mark of interrogation. The total effect is of some handsome and prodigious rodent. He often speaks at the very greatest length, so he has constantly to clear his throat. It is a peculiar and most alarming sound—for all the world as though a spinster is flying into a passion of rage. Many Members of the House of Commons lolling slumbrously on all sides have been startled out of their post-prandial dreams by this clap of thunder interrupting the slow and measured progress of the painstaking Secretary of State.

Has Sir Samuel the right to treat himself and his career so seriously? He has taken but one toss in his ride along the high road of fame; but that was such a painful and heavy fall that it may have dislocated himself and his prospects for good. The marvel is that he climbed back into the saddle so soon and with so few manifestly broken bones. His record is enough to show that he is one of those who are born naturally to assume a respectable responsibility.

Having been born in 1880, Hoare migrated from Harrow to New College, Oxford, about the turn of the century. There he distinguished himself athletically and academically. Probably his contemporaries wearied of wondering if Samuel Hoare could ever do wrong or make a mistake. At some moment he must have accurately formulated the ambition to preside over the changes which nature and history would decree, for he had inherited from Elizabeth Fry an instinct and a feeling for reform. In 1909 he

married Lady Maud Lygon, sister of Lord Beauchamp. This union with a Liberal family must have strengthened the Whiggish tendencies of his mind.

In 1906 he had fought and lost Ipswich as a Conservative: Lady Maud had not long to wait before she became the wife of a Member. In 1910 this immaculate and exemplary young statesman began his unbroken representation of the cast-iron Tory borough of Chelsea. So for nearly thirty years he has had no electoral worries. This medley of artists and of aristocrats, of comfortable affluence and hidden poverty, of eighteenth-century architecture and twentieth-century experiments in concrete can give its Conservative Member little anxiety. It needs no special attention. Half the population is in flux, the other half is rooted to the Embankment and the neighbourhood of the King's Road. A few may talk revolution but a vast majority will infallibly vote Tory. So Sir Samuel has had no constituency distractions: he has been able to apply himself to his own advancement.

At some time or another he began to impress Baldwin, for he was later to enjoy the grateful confidence of his fellow-Harrobian. Baldwin would see in him much which he could cordially respect—learning, high connexions, a mind free from emotional tides or stubborn prejudice. Whether he felt the same enthusiasm for Hoare's naïve disclosure of his own ambition or his ultimate lack of the steel of resolution may be a matter for doubt. But perhaps, when Sam Hoare revealed these facets of his own character, Stanley Baldwin was enjoying one of his intellectual siestas.

During the War he acquired a mass of foreign

decorations. By its end, aged thirty-eight, he was a Lieutenant-Colonel. He could go back to the House of Commons and combine with Lord Winterton and the future Lord Halifax in a team of knowing "old Parliamentary hands". The assiduous and conscientious dullness of two of them may have been relieved by the breezy arrogance of the third. In 1922 Bonar Law jumped the young man of forty-two right into the Air Ministry, but though this was an astonishing event even at that moment of miraculous promotions it was not so surprising in the departmental circumstances of 1922. The Air Ministry was threatened with dissolution or merger with the War Office. The Air Force was a mere skeleton of the vast machine which in the War had won tactical pre-eminence by 1918. But Hoare soaked himself in the work of his department and, when the threat of its death seemed about to mature, he procured the survival of its separate identity by plaintive and lachrymose entreaties. Baldwin put him into his Cabinet when he succeeded Bonar Law. Again from 1924 to 1929 Sam Hoare held this same office. The reinstatement of the senior brains of the Tory Party did not seem to dislodge him from the niche he had won for himself in their counsels.

By 1931 he had become significant enough to be one of the few heads of the Conservative Party who arranged the coalition with Ramsay MacDonald, Herbert Samuel and John Simon. They made him Secretary of State for India after the General Election. For three years and a half he sustained the weight of this great office while the greatest of all constitutional bills was passed into law. He was to the fore the whole time, the utterly reliable instrument of Baldwin's

determination to seem generous to India. First there was the constitution of the Joint Select Committee, then its taking of evidence, when Hoare had to answer hundreds of questions. Then came the unexpected episode when he was charged by Churchill with trying to prejudice the witnesses who were to be called before the Committee. There was next the framing of the Bill itself with its 400 clauses, a deed done, of course, by government draftsmen, but unhappy the Minister who fails to master the legislation which he is going to pilot through the House. Finally there was the protracted series of debates upon the Bill itself, a long Second Reading, the interminable Committee Stage taken, not in a Standing Committee, but on the floor of the House, when every clause was liable to be criticized or recast and any number of new clauses might be added. That did not end the labour. There remained the further possibilities of revision on the Report Stage and last of all the Third Reading.

It is not very remarkable that Hoare's health did not last the full course. He was slightly run down as the Committee Stage advanced and his work was done by the Under-Secretary of State. But till then he had gone ahead with the business of standing up to Churchill and the die-hards of whom Winston became the intellectual chief. The tough business of building a constitution for a sub-continent was rudely interrupted by Churchill's charge of breach of privilege. The Committee of Privileges cleared Sam Hoare completely.

In a debate on their report Mr. Amery was speaking. He said of Churchill that he was so jealous of right and justice that he might have entered th

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controversy saying "*Fiat justitia; ruat coelum.*" With incredible rashness Churchill ejaculated "Translate!" Amery said, "I will translate it, and in order that my Right Honourable Friend can understand it I will translate it in the vernacular—'If I can trip up Sam the Government's bust!'" The huge laugh that followed showed that Amery was expressing a widely held opinion. Hoare and Churchill are not mutually sympathetic men. But any natural antipathy would not prevent their sinking their differences in order to submerge a common enemy of their country. During the Indian controversy Hoare could hardly have enjoyed Churchill's persistent attentions and he was sufficiently anxious for the success of his own measures to have welcomed the other's intermittent embarrassments.

These hostile moves really helped Hoare. In the minds of the overwhelming majority he advanced from a position of negative innocence to positive virtue. Having got his vindication on the question of privilege he was able to proceed with the toils of legislation. No one who listened to his expositions could doubt that he was dealing with a matter of infinite difficulty demanding indefatigable industry. As his thin voice set out line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, those who heard the gradual progress may have fancied that they were listening to a straining steel hawser creaking and groaning as it dragged the massive argument uphill. There was rooted and sometimes well-informed objection to much of what he said, but Hoare was able to wear down the antagonisms of some of his audience by the simple and time-honoured expedient of boring them.

Nobody claimed for him that his performance was in any way stimulating. But his admirers, and he was not without them, could say to one another "Read Sam Hoare to-morrow in Hansard and you will see that not a word is out of place." Faint praise, perhaps, but not so faint as to damn him completely.

Too often has he been likened to a maiden aunt. But certainly his expressions of sour disapproval lend some colour to the comparison. As he has severely plied his horn-rimmed spectacles the irreverent have muttered, "What's troubling Prunes and Prisms Hoare?" But the success of this period of his career often made the world he surveyed seem a sunny place. Without any very manifest cause he would occasionally beam upon his audience as though his progress were of supreme interest to all the world. "How glad," he seemed to be thinking, "they must be to see me doing so nicely." But in politics the Blind Fury is ever pursuing the most successful with the threat of the abhorred shears.

In 1935 Baldwin replaced Simon by Hoare. Many critics who had found the Simon régime less and less tolerable were pleased that the Foreign Secretaryship was to go to a man who seemed to have a decisive mind and positive initiative. They could scarcely foresee that he was going to give them the shock of their lives.

Some kind of crisis was bound to come. Italy was openly plotting to invade Ethiopia and Eden was striving to dissuade the Italians. If persuasion failed the States members of the League could do one of three things: they could condemn, and having uttered their condemnation they could repeat the practical

inertia they had exhibited about Manchuria; they could attempt action which might succeed if given enough time; or they could risk the wrath of Mussolini and take immediately effective action. Instead of being extremely active or absurdly passive they chose the middle way which of all possible courses turned out to be the most disastrous.

Hoare assumed his new duties with the pleasure of satisfied ambition impaired by trepidation. India had been stiff enough. The affairs of a world where Japan was triumphant, Mussolini rampant and Hitler gathering his power for a spring were much more daunting. A man of supreme stamina and outstanding qualities would have needed a respite after so much exhausting work, and few would credit Samuel Hoare with belonging to that class. Conscientious, tired, apprehensive he entered upon the *damnosa hereditas* bequeathed by Simon without even a chance to revive his limited energies. Nemesis had clearly marked him down. In mid-September at the Assembly of the League of Nations he was the mouthpiece of a statement of policy to which several heads in the Cabinet had made their contribution. This resounding lecture which Sam Hoare read to the representatives of the States Members had a remarkable effect in England—it electrified a public which had, thanks to the misnamed "Peace Ballot," become very League-minded. One phrase in particular flattered the public fancy—"steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression." That Hoare himself regarded these words as the heart of his message seems proved by his repeating them at the moment of their delivery with an emphatic descent of the open palm.

But this speech did not shoo off Signor Mussolini. Hostilities began with October. Baldwin contriving to discern a "lull" (apparently not for the Ethiopians) decided on a General Election. With Sam Hoare's noble phrases on their lips, and the delectable personality of Anthony Eden to extol, Government candidates collectively won a great victory. That was in mid-November. Exactly five weeks later the senior Conservative mascot had resigned.

What had happened to the man whose words had inspired Geneva and helped so substantially to win a General Election? It was decided towards the end of November that he could be released to carry out his doctor's orders and take a holiday. He said he was urged by his colleagues to stay in Paris on his way to Switzerland. Some at least of his colleagues in the Cabinet urged him not to pause in his journey. In Paris he had to discuss the situation with the cunning Laval, who had earlier in the same year made a compact with Mussolini. To him what mattered was the security of France against German aggression. He did not care for the Rule of Law. With Laval controlling French foreign policy the long-standing charge that France was interested in the League simply as a means of permanently subjecting Germany seemed wholly justified.

So Laval twisted along between the fancied new security on France's Italian frontier and the ultimate necessity of keeping British friendship. He and Hoare forgot the fine speeches of September, and Hoare in particular overlooked what he and his colleagues had been saying during the General Election. They forgot that their duty was supposed

to be to discover means of carrying out Article X of the Covenant of the League: "The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League."

The next logical step in the organizing of collective resistance to aggression was the oil sanction. It would have been effective; Mussolini had proclaimed that he would have treated it as an act of war and would retaliate accordingly. Therefore, said Laval and Hoare, we must have no oil sanction. Incredible as it may appear, that crude process is hardly an abbreviation of the relevant part of Hoare's personal explanation. The offender was in fact to be allowed to decide how much pressure could be applied against him!

So they drew up the Laval-Hoare proposals, which immediately leaked into the Paris Press. Huge concessions were to be made to a State after she had flouted the League of which she was a member and had committed the most impudent and flagrant aggression. When some of Hoare's advisers in Paris heard of the terms they were so amazed that they suggested that the people at home would not stand them. Hoare tartly replied that they knew nothing about it. He then continued his journey to Switzerland and tried to rest.

Now his path may have been strewn with thorns and stones. But there must have been some blind area in his mind if he thought that public opinion would accept these proposals calmly. You can hardly win an election on one policy and within three weeks expect to be allowed to repudiate it. It may be asked

whether he could have done anything else. If he could contemplate behaving thus in Paris in December he should never have made his September speech at Geneva. He should have found some means of obliging the French Government openly to specify the co-operative action they were prepared to undertake. Rather than put his name to the proposals at all he should have resigned. For the public held him to be bound both by the Covenant and by the September speech.

Seldom before or since has the tide of indignation which Hoare so completely failed to foresee mounted with such overwhelming rapidity. Members of Parliament said they were deluged with wrathful correspondence. The Press joined in the storm. Most decisive of all was the conduct of *The Times*. For one edition it stuttered, but then the direction of its own awfully respectable circle became so clearly set that it began to thunder out his doom upon Sir Samuel Hoare. The narrow strip of territory proposed to be given to Haile Selassie as a means of access to the sea and as compensation for what he would be losing was satirized in a famous leading article entitled "A corridor for camels." This was too much; it was too like mutiny within the camp. Indeed this strange instance of attachment to principle is quite inexplicable when we recall the prostration of *The Times* before Mussolini's brother aggressors in Germany.

Hoare had to cut short his holiday and come home. But Nemesis—a warped and unwarranted Nemesis—was filling in every detail in her plan for his discomfiture. Before she let him leave Switzerland she cast him down on the ice so that he injured his nose; so

when next he publicly appeared in London he wore a broad strip of plaster across the damaged part.

Injuries were piling up, though the whole Press did not turn and rend him. With an uncanny instinct for backing the losing horse the *Evening Standard* published a placard bearing the charmingly ambiguous legend "Back Sir Samuel Hoare!" When I first saw it I imagined that the word "back" was an imperative and that the proper name was to be parsed in the vocative case, the whole sentence meaning "Away—or "avaunt—Sir Samuel Hoare!" Then I recalled that such an interpretation was not consistent with the policy the Beaverbrook Press had been urging. They could hardly want Hoare to retire in shame. So I next took the phrase to be an exclamation of surprise, delight and welcome, i.e., "So you're *back* again Sir Samuel Hoare! We *are* glad to see you." Finally it occurred to me that there was a third possibility. The word "back" could certainly be an imperative of the transitive verb which colloquially means "support" and Sir Samuel Hoare was the object. The world was invited to support the co-author of the Paris proposals. If that was the right conclusion the placards of the *Evening Standard* were substituting propaganda for news, and that, I felt, could hardly be.

The moment of Hoare's speech of personal explanation after his resignation was the first of many dramatic scenes in the life of the Parliament which had been born five weeks before. But not even the Abdication produced a more burning moment. There were not only the circumstances which many regarded as betrayal. There was also the central figure himself, flushed, ill, gloomy, almost tragically ludicrous with

the broad band of plaster disfiguring his sorrowful features. A career of uninteresting but unqualified success was suddenly wrecked after barely half a year at the Foreign Office.

Hoare seemed to know that the word "traitor" was in the minds of some, for he spoke with a brisk directness almost amounting to defiance. There was no sound of the namby-pamby accents which had so often made Morpheus the master of the Chamber. He explained that he had been obsessed with the need to avoid a European war, and argued at some length in favour of his proposals. Great Britain alone had taken any military precautions. "Not a ship, not a machine, not a man had been moved by any other Member State." He protested humbly that his conscience was clear. Only at the very end did his voice falter, in a manner too often described to justify repetition. He went from the packed Chamber to the loneliness outside on the verge of collapse.

For a sick man the speech was a stout effort. Many have said that subsequent events have proved his wisdom. But such apologists overlook the fact that his own action was itself an event of cardinal consequence and may have in itself fatally compromised the future of the League. Aggressive acts and aggressive designs were being rewarded. The next logical measure of restraint, the oil sanction, was never proceeded with, partly, no doubt, because others besides Hoare feared the consequences of effective action, but probably also because opinion in the United States was disastrously estranged. No more was heard of the willingness of the United States to "limit her supplies of oil to the aggressor state to normal," i.e., only to

allow the customary peace-time stream to flow into Italy, a limitation which would render effective an otherwise general embargo upon oil imports.

There was in Hoare's mind an intellectual gap; he had not faced the fact that it is useless to begin to restrain a robber if you hand him the swag directly he growls about what he will do to you. As to the complaint about our isolated defensive action, is it too much to say that he should have thought of that before and arranged—or tried to arrange—collective action? Whatever may have been the temper of the moment it is now much more the vogue to say, "We should have avoided our later troubles if we had forcibly prevented Italy—if necessary by isolated action—from using for military transport the Suez Canal." To which the Hoare school would retort that you do not end war by making it. And his critics would charge again crying, "The League's main purpose was to preserve by every means the independence of States Members." Thus might the debate revolve.

It was a resounding crash. How Hoare himself must have suffered as he was racked by the pangs of his acutely developed ambitions is beyond the power of human imagination. But before very many weeks had passed his following were pushing his claims for re-admission to the Cabinet. "The Cabinet," they complained, "is not overstocked with brains; however gross some may regard Hoare's error nobody can deny his ability. Let him return to strengthen the team." It was made known that a Minister would soon be appointed to Co-ordinate the Defence Departments. The problem of Defence was debated on 9th March 1936. Though it was less than three months

since his resignation Hoare saw fit to intervene from a back bench.

His contribution was clearly intended to impress with its statesmanlike breadth of vision. But it really meant very little except at its peroration, which many found too full of meaning. It was a painfully lavish puff of Baldwin. There were the final words . . . "Among the Prime Minister's followers there will be none more willing to give him support than a very old friend and colleague who has just had the privilege of addressing the House this afternoon." Why, someone asked, did he not say outright, "Please make me Minister for Co-ordination of Defence"? By this obtuse obviousness he destroyed any chance he may have had of being hustled back so soon into office. Neither he nor Winston Churchill was offered the new job. Baldwin's choice fell upon the Attorney-General, Sir Thomas Inskip.

But Hoare's sad divorce from office ended in June. Lord Monsell, the former Chief Whip in the House of Commons, smilingly resigned from the Admiralty and Hoare stepped into his boots as First Lord. During his term Naval rearmament went ahead. He supervised with satisfaction the strengthening of the arm which had in his judgment not been sufficiently powerful at the height of the Italo-Ethiopian trouble. By the end of the year Baldwin was leaning on the advice of "his old friend and colleague" as Edward VIII was presented with his dreadful dilemma. It was probably sound advice as Hoare watched his old confidant lift the nation over the morass with consummate power and skill.

Neville Chamberlain shares Baldwin's opinion of

Hoare, for when he succeeded as Premier in May 1937 Hoare was promoted to the great position of the Home Office. Again he was successor to Sir John Simon, and will he follow him as Chancellor? There is now little else for Hoare to become except Prime Minister. Will he arrive at the goal of his warmly nurtured ambitions?

It is difficult to recall a precedent of a man becoming the head of a Government after a set-back like Hoare's resignation. There is another circumstance which is unkindly darkening his prospects. His zeal has been so great that he has been unable to hold his office without proposing a major act of criminal reform. I have already referred to the Liberal influence in Hoare's composition. To him it is no longer right to base the practice of punishment upon the theory of retribution; to his mind its functions must be deterrent and reformative. This principle governs the provisions of the Criminal Justice Bill.

But no one can imagine that this abatement of the rigours of our penal system commands the joyous approval of the whole of Sir Samuel's party. There are many Conservatives who, rightly or wrongly, identify severity with deterrence. One of the provisions of the Bill is to abolish flogging except for attacks in gaol upon prison officers. "How," say his critics, "can Hoare justify the retention of the cat for an assault upon a great hulking warder, and its abolition where a lonely old woman has suffered robbery with violence?" The Government have, at the moment of writing, been obliged to leave the question to a free vote of the House of Commons. The Bill itself has had its Report Stage and Third

Reading postponed, and postponement sometimes means abandonment. Even if the "anti-flogging" clause survives the Lower House there remains the House of Lords, who will probably reject it. The whole controversy has placed the Bill in jeopardy and shaken Hoare's prestige.

It is bad luck, very bad luck. Not all Hoare's other qualifications, birth, brains, career, high connexions, Harrovian education, can wholly nullify the resentment at what is so widely regarded as gratuitous interference with a penal system that is already unreasonably lenient. Why should a Conservative Home Secretary be so provocative? This time there is no Stanley Baldwin to insist on a great reform.

Sir Kingsley Wood may not have been to Harrow but he has never had to endure the ordeals that Hoare has suffered. He and good fortune are on the best of terms. He is a most unusual type for prominence in the Tory Party—or indeed for any modern political notoriety—the son of a Wesleyan Minister, a former practising solicitor, without the background of famous school or ancient university. But he early showed that success was likely to become a habit with him as he greatly distinguished himself in his law examinations. He served a political apprenticeship on the London County Council from 1911 to 1918.

During those years he busied himself with Committees on Building, Old Age Pensions, Insurance and Separation Allowances. These activities might seem humdrum, but at the end of the War he was in the forefront of a movement to persuade Lloyd George to establish a Ministry of Health. His work had had a direction and unity of purpose. The



SIR KINGSLEY WOOD

Ministry of Health came into being to supersede the old Local Government Board. In the 1918 Election Kingsley Wood was elected for the working-class division of West Woolwich. On this seat he has remained enthroned ever since. Once—in 1929—he was nearly shaken off his perch. But he is now one of the very few men whose personality and reputation may make a material difference to their chances at elections. At the advanced age of fifty-eight he can probably set aside private electoral worries.

But the need for him to fight in his own constituency has kept him nearer the public heart than the remote contacts with a few important constituents that are the utmost Hoare needs. Mr. Lloyd George, likewise a solicitor and a dissenter, has always set a high value on Kingsley Wood's capacity. His knighthood was awarded during Lloyd George's administration. All through the last twenty years he has reflected the beams of Fortune's smile. He has made good friends of event and circumstance: once his hug was too openly affectionate for the taste of some. His career in office illustrates a luck which is as conspicuous as Hoare's ambition.

Directly he entered the House he had the opportunity of learning the work of the Ministry which he had helped to create and over which he would one day preside. He served as Parliamentary Private Secretary both to Dr. Addison and Sir Alfred Mond who were successively Minister of Health. Being an opponent of the despatch of the Coalition he could not be given office by Bonar Law. But in 1924 he was made Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health. Here he was soon recognized as an asset.

He was efficient and unruffled by opposition. He enjoyed moreover the great good fortune of having as his chief Neville Chamberlain. If he had any merits four years and a half of co-operation in the same Ministry would reveal them to the future Man of Munich. When, after his one narrow escape at West Woolwich he found himself with his party in opposition he joined effectively in the hunt of the Labour Government. By speech and by question he showed himself to be an expert tormentor.

His touch was light and impudent—as comic as a tickle, but far more damaging. When an official veil was being drawn during question time over a matter which was notoriously causing friction within the Government, Kingsley Wood leant across from the Opposition Front Bench and innocently asked the Prime Minister with mock solicitude, “No trouble over this, I hope?” But with the formation of the emergency National Government the amnesty to Ramsay MacDonald’s most hostile opponents had to be complete and Kingsley Wood was made Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education till the General Election.

In an administration of unqualified Conservatism he would doubtless have had high office at once. But after the election Sir Kingsley had to be satisfied for the time being with the Post Office. This position, however, was one of growing importance. Despite financial crises and industrial depression the work of the Post Office expanded uniformly. The Postmaster-General was also in a certain degree the Minister ultimately responsible for the British Broadcasting Corporation, whose range and influence were now

entering their stage of maximum development. The minute Sir Kingsley Wood had to work in double harness with the gigantic autocrat Sir John Reith. Double bass and high falsetto contrived a passable harmony; some credit must go to the Postmaster-General for his patient relationships with one who had the embarrassing reputation of being a superman.

While he was in office the purveying of postage stamps and acceptance of telegrams ceased being the duty of rude and inferior civil servants and became a polite amenity. So acceptably did Kingsley Wood dispense the services offered by the Post Office and the B.B.C. and so rapidly did these two services expand in importance that he was, though still only Postmaster-General, brought into the Cabinet in December 1933. He became the managing director of an instalment of agreeable socialism.

Years before—in 1928—his ability had been recognized by a Privy Councillorship; and now his fortune brought him into the Executive. His ready tongue disarmed would-be critics and enhanced his Parliamentary reputation. The Government took the responsibility of examining correspondence from England to the Irish Free State containing bets for the Irish Sweepstake. An opponent of the betting regulations asked furiously, "Does the Post Office need any extra staff to tamper with the correspondence of private individuals?" Kingsley Wood replied without a moment's hesitation, "No, Sir. We take it in our stride!"

When Baldwin became Prime Minister he elevated Kingsley Wood to the Ministry of Health. His luck should again be observed. The Slum Clearance drive

had caused the greatest resentment among many Conservatives who complained that property was being confiscated without adequate compensation. A storm of odium had buffeted Sir Hilton Young, Kingsley Wood's predecessor. When Kingsley Wood succeeded he was not regarded as the predatory Minister; the storm had died down and he escaped it all. Pure luck saved him from being the scapegoat of infuriated property-owners.

Again Fortune laughed with her puckish favourite. Dissatisfaction and misgiving grew about the conduct of the programme for Air Expansion. It was alleged that, in spite of mountainous estimates for Air re-armament, we were lagging further and further behind Germany. Lord Swinton, however efficient he may have been as the fly-wheel of a department, lacked the manners of the natural democrat. He was abrupt and inaccessible. Men disliked being made to feel inferior or to hear their inquiries brushed aside with apparent contempt. Lord Swinton was unable to help giving the most unfortunate impression. Moreover, though the head of a great spending department, he had chosen to accept a Viscounty. Mr. Chamberlain defended his noble Minister for a time and then found it would be wisest to let him go. For a successor, a man who would be certain to make the heavens hum, he chose Sir Kingsley Wood in May 1938.

Little more than a year has passed, but, whereas twelve months ago we were wringing our hands over our alleged weakness in the air, to-day our bombers fly by the hundred to the South of France and back without a stop. They were then said to be planning a visit to our Polish allies. We are now reputed to have

an aerial armada of Spitfires. Each squadron in the Air Force has behind it a perpetually increasing depth of reserve machines. Our power for strict self-defence is known to be formidable and promises unpleasant surprises for any sky marauders. Our capacity for doing injury to others is now beyond being measured.

Has this change been wrought exclusively by the magic of Kingsley Wood? No doubt his most constant satellites would like us to think so, but any such illusion must be rejected. Much of the planning for expansion was accomplished before Kingsley Wood became Secretary of State for Air. The designs of the great new factories were approved before the responsibility for their products became his. Since he has had the power those factories have been completed and have come into full production.

He is reaping a rich harvest, all of which he did not sow himself. Unavoidably credit is attaching to the lucky little Minister for the preparations set in hand by his predecessors. It may be said that the things that matter are results and not the winning or losing of laurels. But no one should deprive Kingsley Wood of the credit for furthering the acceleration. Under his supervision and the dynamic impulse which Lloyd George long ago saw he possessed, the Air expansion has proceeded with unpredicted smoothness and rapidity.

Men like working for Sir Kingsley and he can stimulate them to make their best efforts. With subordinates and deputations he is brisk without being brusque. He does not waste time, and though he is often the victim of fatigue he listens keenly to what is said and impresses those who wait upon

him that their submissions are not wasted. He is an example of the triumph of inner force over externals. An effort has to be made by any stranger before he is able to take seriously this friendly but imperative sprite who shrills out his jests and commands in the popular tones of Tooting.

But while he sees the skies darkening with the armadas of which he is the political master he keeps an ear studiously to the ground. Not only is he a born administrator—a departmental winner—but he is the keenest and most cunning of politicians. Since February 1938 he has been Grand Master of the Primrose League, so the fortunes of the Conservative Party are very dear to him.

It has never been denied that after Munich Sir Kingsley began to urge the Prime Minister to seize the moment of his maximum popularity, when part of the country was hailing him as the architect of abiding peace, to hold a General Election and so to cash in on peace. He is said to have taken this plea beyond the confidential confines of the Cabinet and to have trotted round the lobbies on his opportunist errand. Some thought it was an excellent idea. Others felt their stomachs turning with disgust. On the second day of the Munich debate a speech was made by Sir Sydney Herbert. He rarely spoke, and this speech turned out to be his last. Few men could have said what he said so effectively. He was a devoted servant of the Conservative Party, a man of birth, breeding, wealth and education. He had lost a leg through an operation and was correctly considered by many to be a dying man. He spoke in a passion of rage.

After calling Munich "a grave and desperate humiliation" he said "There are also rumours that if things go smoothly and favourably and comfortably, there will be a General Election. Now I do not care at this time about my own party, or any other party, but there could be no greater iniquity in the world than to force a General Election on the people of this country at this moment. . . . The Government have a fine majority. . . . At the expense of much dishonour we have gained a temporary respite of peace. In the name of all that is decent let us use that for rearmament. But if we have a General Election with all the stupid bitterness which occurs at every General Election . . . who will gain anything by it? I am sure the Prime Minister, whose integrity and character I know and admire, would never give his countenance to such a solution. *There may be some tiny Tammany Hall ring who want it* but my solution would be quite different. . . . I ask the Prime Minister to make his Government really national, to broaden its basis, to invite the Labour Party into it, to invite above all the Trade Union leaders into it. . . ."

Thus was a mortal blow struck at Kingsley Wood's interesting electoral plans. Thanks to this dying declaration and to other speeches he was compelled to see his design of obtaining immediately for the party in which he was now so important a figure another lease of power, by at once capitalizing public ignorance and uninformed gratitude, fading out of the realm of possibility. Everybody concluded that the main link in the "tiny Tammany Hall ring" was Kingsley Wood. The Prime Minister did not take the advice offered by the dying patriot to form a broad-based govern-

ment. But neither did he heed Kingsley Wood's politic urgencies to go while the going seemed good. To many he seemed to have erred, for once in his life, on the side of astuteness.

This episode was a momentary misfortune. What he had conceived as a skilful move turned out not to be so very popular. But Kingsley Wood is not given to brooding on failure or miscalculation. The chances are that he has already forgotten how some dull souls failed to agree that the snatching of a party advantage was the thing that mattered so tremendously. Perhaps he will even chuckle at their ineptitude. Were not their objections blind, quixotic and suicidal? He can be seen scanning the horizon for the next main chance. "Never mind, Prime Minister, we shall come again," for this amiable nonconformist suggests the language of the race-course. He is a political stayer.

Upon Sir Samuel Hoare his more embittering trials have left a harsher mark. If appearances ever betray what is revolving in a man's mind he must worry ceaselessly—about his work, his department and himself. He may not magnetize his companions. His qualities may be naked of apparel. But so far as they exist they are fine qualities which might conceivably take him to the summit. Very rarely is such academic excellence to be found within a character so absolutely incorruptible. His theoretical claims to leadership are great and he may suffer bitterly if they are thwarted, just as he suffers unnecessarily when he has politically to make a choice between two evils.

No doubt it pains Hoare to have to exclude any refugee, for he knows well enough that Great Britain will profit eventually if she keeps her doors open as an

asylum for the persecuted. But he knows also that the public would not agree and that a too-ready greeting would promote such Anti-Semitism as already exists here. Kingsley Wood, on the other hand, if faced with such a choice would quickly make his decision, explain good-naturedly the reasons which had brought him to make it and then cheerfully look around him for the next problem to solve.

Now we can make use of such men even when they are too enamoured of politics for their own sake. So if the choice of leader had to be narrowed down to these two, the betting would to-day have to be "Six to four on Kingsley Wood."

XIV

LORD HALIFAX

IN these pages it has been my purpose not wilfully to omit describing anyone who seems to me a possible or probable Prime Minister within the next decade. For several periods during the present century it has been the unchallenged fashion to say, "Of course we shall never again have a Prime Minister in the House of Lords." Curzon comforted himself and those who were ambitious that he should attain the highest pinnacle of fame by the reflection that he was unfortunate in having been born a peer. Whether that circumstance in fact kept him down is perhaps merely a matter for charitable conjecture. But to-day that rule is no longer exempt from challenge. There is a substantial possibility amounting, in the minds of some, to likelihood, that before very long we shall see as Prime Minister, Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, third Viscount Halifax. It is further being predicted that the House of Commons would have, in those circumstances, to be led by Sir John Simon. That accessory would produce frustration and fireworks in approximately equal proportions.

The inconveniences of a Prime Minister in the House of Lords are numerous and obvious. He depends for his support on a majority in the Commons. He



LORD HALIFAX

*"It was surely legitimate
highly legitimate"*

should be directly answerable to the elected representatives of the people. However good his intelligence service it is only frequent presence in the Chamber of the House of Commons which will enable him to apprehend its mood, its temper and its fluctuating affections. This is said to be a democratic age; we all pretend that it is. Even though leadership is to be found among those most richly endowed with the blessings of heredity and environment we like to think that the King's first minister is a Commoner like most of the rest of us.

For many of the same reasons it is not an ideal arrangement to have the Foreign Secretary out of the Commons. He is the Minister of Peace—and of War. To-day War means jeopardy for all citizens, and normally they would like their elected Members to be able to support, oppose, question and defy the Minister upon whose skill depend their chances of survival. But once again, at the most improbable moment, the Foreign Minister is a peer. The arrangement has not had all the disadvantages that were predicted for it. Chamberlain has shouldered his task of speaking for the Foreign Office in the Commons with the enthusiastic self-confidence of the amateur.

Alone among Cabinet Ministers it seems that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be steadfastly found in the Commons. The Lower House has to-day complete control of finance. A budget statement could not, so long as our constitution retains its present main features, be made to any other audience.

What peculiarities of circumstance and character have made Lord Halifax so considerable a candidate? They are much the same as those which made him

Foreign Secretary. He denies that he had any desire to supersede Anthony Eden. Indeed it is likely that he shrank from the task. But there was really nobody else. Winston Churchill analysed all the other possible aspirants in a speech of memorable satire. Of Sir Samuel Hoare he said, "Once bitten twice shy."

The schoolboy outlook persists with the politician who is always unconsciously assimilating fresh impressions. The politician has learned the need for a certain minimum of toleration, so his cruelty is less gross and less persistent than that of the adolescent. But he rejoices in inventing sobriquets and impieties for men of special eminence. Not all of them are very flattering or very good-natured.

But with Lord Halifax any such enterprise is hopeless. He cannot be accused of a shred of priggishness or of a vestige of hypocrisy. Anything he said would be felt: most of the things he feels he finds himself able to say. Nor has he any tricks, foibles or mannerisms to encourage more or less friendly caricature. So contemporary critics retreat before a character and a personality that are impregnable.

Thirty years hence, some literary descendant of Lytton Strachey may take it upon himself, by fresh flights of imagination and scraps of doubtful history, to blacken our more virtuous contemporaries for the entertainment of an inquisitive posterity. He will need to work hard to persuade any mud to stick on Lord Halifax: nothing is known against the prisoner.

He has an impressive academic background. After Eton and Christ Church he became a Fellow of All Souls, the society which likes to pride itself on an intellectual dominance of the realm. Oxford has kept

her hand raised to the salute, for in 1933 she made him her Chancellor, the suggestion being that she regards him as quite one of her most distinguished political offspring. Baldwin, whose academic interests were arrested in their development and were eventually eclectic, enjoys the same honour at the hands of Cambridge. After all, the reason can be offered that Lord Baldwin was thrice Prime Minister. For the analogous honour Halifax is doubly qualified, by scholarship as well as statesmanship.

In 1910, aged twenty-nine, the Honourable Edward Wood became Member for the comfortable seat of Ripon in the West Riding of Yorkshire, conveniently near to his family's territorial interests. Here he sat for fifteen years. Twenty-seven years later the Honourable Charles Wood, the son of the present Lord Halifax, was ushered, aged twenty-five, into the rather less amenable constituency of York. Evidently the family genius has great faith in the sapling. The father's immense length was deployed over the Conservative back benches till the disturbance caused by the European War. Already he had begun to impress that turbulent assembly by his unflinching continence of character. But he was a less exciting figure than the violent scenes that distinguished pre-War politics.

For those who came back there was an outstanding opportunity. They could posture as "old Parliamentary hands" anxious to preserve in a shattered world and a mercantile collection of representatives those Parliamentary privileges which had helped the House of Commons to function before the deluge. They had the advantage of an experience which had preceded Lloyd George's generous distribution of coupons.

Edward Wood sought to become an earnest guardian of all these important values. He took his Parliamentary duties more seriously than ever, but he was so decorous about them that few dared to whisper "careerist." He was still a young hopeful, although he was by now in the late thirties.

I wonder whether Lord Halifax now regrets being numbered among those who urged Lloyd George at Versailles to eschew clemency towards the vanquished. But his criticisms impelled him in another direction. He was one of the men who early discovered how futile was Lloyd George's Irish policy. Bloodshed merely begat fresh shedding of blood. What was being done could be justified neither on Liberal nor on Unionist grounds. So Wood was as ready as anyone for negotiation, conciliation—and appeasement. He was in company as noble as himself. Lord Hugh and Lord Robert Cecil drew their bows upon the Prime Minister.

While Neville Chamberlain moved obscurely on the back benches Edward Wood kept himself to the front by assiduity of behaviour and sincerity of attitude. Baldwin was attracted by him. He stood out physically and morally from the ranks of his shoddier colleagues. Moreover he possessed that for which Baldwin has always fostered a predilection—high birth. In 1921 Edward Wood was made Under-Secretary for the Colonies by Lloyd George.

But when Baldwin and Bonar Law slew the Prime Minister Wood was as pleased as anyone, joining the less experienced majority of Conservative rebels, and being ready for the Administration of undiluted Conservatism. Austen Chamberlain, Birkenhead and

others of the more able men could not join the new Government as they had openly sided with Lloyd George. Bonar Law was obliged to fill offices from the ranks of the Under-Secretaries. Edward Wood, in that moment of rocketing promotions, was made President of the Board of Education. He was now officially assured of the larger audiences which his monumental dullness of manner had hitherto failed to attract.

When Baldwin came back at the head of a great majority in the winter of 1924 he remembered the saintly ex-President. But now another aspect of his feudal character was to be honoured and he became Minister of Agriculture. The duty of presiding over the progressive decline of Britain's greatest industry was not to be pursued for long, for somebody had to be found to succeed Lord Reading, "the greatest Jew in Christendom," as Viceroy of India.

Baldwin thought and blinked. What was he looking for? He wanted somebody who would pave the way for more reforms, who could enable the Home Government to make haste slowly, who could help Whitehall to give Delhi the maximum of formal responsibility while conceding the minimum of decisive power. Someone was needed who would manage to impress the Indians with our sincerity, to whom all ideas of calling coloured people "damned niggers" were totally foreign, who could see wings prolonging the shoulder-blades of all God's children, who had knowledge, culture, gentleness of manner, and incorruptibility of character. He looked around his colleagues with their varying abilities and different ideas of what constituted a gentleman. His choice fell upon the noblest

Christian in politics. Edward Wood exchanged the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for Viceregal Lodge.

For Baldwin's liberal purpose the selection was one of his more masterly strokes. Although it may have been a sort of snobbery which made him give Lord Irwin, as Wood now became, the whole of his confidence, Irwin was himself neither small enough nor imaginative enough to be a snob. I do not believe that thoughts of racial differences or class distinctions ever enter his mind for a moment. He treats everyone as an equal with a naturalness more thorough than I have known in anyone else. There is no forced descent from some lonely eminence, no condescension to men of low estate, no hearty greeting with a noisy laugh or fondling embrace. Halifax has exalted ordinariness; he is the living recipient of every beatitude. He is meek without cringing. His hunger after righteousness is plain to see upon his face. He is ready to show mercy to those rulers who least deserve it. It would be a blasphemy to charge him with a trace of impurity. And if he could find the way and could have his way, he would make peace. He is a real child of God.

He is good simply because it does not occur to him to be anything else. But as you talk to him you are not weighed down by any awareness of being in the presence of someone who is both great and good. Who could feel ill at ease when talking to someone who is, like some large boy, rather uncertain of the pronunciation of the English "R"? He is capable of saying "I have always regarded Neville as a vewy stwaight fellah." You look into large eyes set in a

face that is free of prejudice. His chin is not prominent and his mouth is of the wide variety that novelists call "generous." Of all the strange features the upper lip is most characteristic. It proclaims its present nakedness of the moustache he once wore. He is at once in touch with you. If something slips from his lips which is clearly uncongenial to his companion his tact bids him steer away to a more sympathetic subject.

So the most sensitive Indian would be hard put to it to pick a quarrel. It is said that when as Lord Irwin he sailed for India and his ship arrived on a Sunday he declined to disembark till the next morning. The Indians who understood are reported to have been favourably impressed. Here, they may have said, was a Christian who avoided unnecessary bustle and racket on his holy day. His first meeting with Gandhi can be easily reconstructed. It was an incident without drama, without ceremony, without recrimination and without polemics. It opened the door to further negotiations. His policy was based on the theory that, if he went on giving, the other would grow tired of asking. And so it proved. The Gandhi-Irwin conversations resulted in the decline of anarchy and the approach to the conference table. Mr. Baldwin cordially endorsed what the Viceroy was doing. He himself was having a rough passage with his own die-hards.

Lord Irwin's term as Viceroy had nearly run out, but Baldwin, his patron, was in the middle of the sea. He obstinately declined to do what Churchill and his faction furiously desired—to lead an imperialist opposition to the Labour Government's Indian policy. In March 1931 Baldwin decided publicly to wash

the Conservative linen, and he made a speech to which the House of Commons listened in a sort of pale silence. The die-hards hated the oblique rebukes which he shot right home but they sat in chilly self-discipline. It was the sensational utterance which, as its last sentence but one, contained this famous challenge: "If there are those in our party who approach this subject in a niggling grudging spirit, who would have to have forced out of their hands one concession after another, if they be a majority, in God's name let them choose a man to lead them!"

But earlier in the same speech he had been as eloquent in his defence of Irwin. He deprecated the use of the words "victory" and "defeat" about the conversations between him and Gandhi. "Such a conclusion as has been reached could not have been reached by any other Englishman than Lord Irwin. It is a great tribute to his *character*—a character which has given him a prestige in India that nothing else could have afforded him." Later on Baldwin quoted from one of the many letters he was receiving. This specimen came from an old colonel. "You and Lord Irwin are negrophiles'. . . . That is not the way to cement the Empire. This spirit will break up our Empire infallibly, and that is what I am out to fight."

Again Baldwin struck out for the absent Irwin who could not defend himself. "You cannot reverse the engines without breaking up the whole machine. You cannot reverse the engines on the ground of sane and wise policy, and you cannot reverse the engines on the simple ground of British honour. . . . The ultimate result depends, not on force, but on good will, sympathy and understanding between India and

Great Britain; and the great work of Lord Irwin is that he has, after many years of suspicion, bridged the gap. He has bridged it by ability and character. . . . Five years is plenty of time for the best of us to make mistakes. Whatever mistakes he may have made, I am firmly convinced that, when the history of this time comes to be written, his name will stand out as that of one of the greatest Viceroys, and a Viceroy that I had the honour myself of sending to India."

Be it observed that, while Baldwin used great eloquence, he hardly troubled to argue and merely asserted again and again his faith in Irwin's *character*. It is a character which is deeply embedded in religion. The writer cannot presume to dogmatize on the truth or otherwise of beliefs. It might be his desire but it is not his function; what he is entitled to assert is the plain truism that a man whose conduct is directed by a religious impulse is often happier and more effective merely because he is more confident. Even war itself, to a man of deep spiritual belief in the ultimate unreality of the things which we now touch and see, loses half its grossness by losing all its terrors. And Lord Halifax is more than a mere believer; he is an institutionalist as well.

He is an Anglican. The Church to which he adheres with such fidelity is divided horizontally by countless fissures. Roman Catholics might call them "schisms." While Lord Halifax himself does nothing fissiparous to add to the Church's renown for standing every sort of doctrinal strain he is to be found on the very topmost layer. He is as "high" as his own head. His life proves that an observer of elaborate ritual can keep his simplicity of soul. Only some lack of

popular passion in his sermons could have kept him, if he had been ordained, from the summit of the Anglican hierarchy. While he was making a speech of specially righteous sentiment in the House of Lords an elderly listener in one of the galleries sniggered to his neighbour, "He'd have made a good bishop!"

So be it; but not all bishops have been bad men or incompetent men. Put William Temple in charge of the Ministry of Health and Hensley Henson at the Foreign Office and you would face a bracing period of government. So too Edward Halifax's spotless virtue has not caused him to fall short of ministerial competence.

Critics have displayed a curious ignorance in some of their criticisms. After a brief interval of rest on his return from India he went back, at the invitation of Ramsay MacDonald, to preside over the Board of Education. It seemed most becoming that he should unite education with uprightness, though his name was associated with a circular to local authorities which caused a momentary fear lest the secondary schools might be sacrificed to economy. When Baldwin became Prime Minister there was a "general post" among the elect. Halifax went to the War Office, at a moment when ideas of *la guerre totale* were still deemed to be ridiculous, and when the Army was hardly to be taken seriously. So the foolish critics began their babble. "Why," said one in a supremely fatuous mood, "should that dear innocent creature allow old Baldwin to make him Secretary of State for War?"

After the 1935 election he was relieved of departmental duties and, first as Lord Privy Seal, and then

as Lord President of the Council, he acted as leader of the House of Lords. The serenity and somnolent calm of that august assembly were secure in his keeping as chief Government spokesman. But before the Eden crisis he was to be the centre of a strange episode. He went to Germany in the autumn of 1937 ostensibly to view a hunting exhibition, for his humane nature has never commanded him to shun the genteel pastime of blood sports. General Goering was his host, and an incredulous public was asked to believe that the expedition was devoid of political significance.

The poison began to work at once. It seems that Goering is capable of making himself agreeable. Like a master he employed with his noble visitor the method which was then practised by the Germans in their contacts with Englishmen. Halifax was made heartily at home. At once the charity that is always near the surface convinced him that Goering was quite a good fellow. His cruelties were obscured, if not quite forgotten. Halifax, intent on seeing anything that could be remotely confused with goodness, did not perceive the escaped megalomaniac. He saw instead a great fat egotist overflowing with his own importance, relatively free from physical fear, not without some vestiges of breeding or a certain gross humour, with a childish love of ostentation. "Humour him," whispered the voice of Christian charity, "if you stroke him he will purr and hide his claws." Thus did Halifax become *persona grata* to a man whom the best judges have called the least objectionable member of a government of criminals.

What passed between them is not public property. But we may infer that when Halifax returned to

report to Neville Chamberlain, his new master, he expressed at least a mild amusement in his new acquaintance. Goering was not described as a creature of appalling potentialities; he was one who shared the psychology of other men. In this hopeful state of mind Halifax succeeded Eden in March 1938.

Munich did not seem to mean exactly the same thing for him as for Neville Chamberlain. The stripping of the defences of Czechoslovakia, the flight of the Czechs and Jews from the Sudetenland, the possible consequences to the remnant of the republic were much more prominent in the conscience of one whose religion enjoined care for all who might fall into great tribulation. He early revealed that he did not hail the "settlement" as a triumph of the new diplomacy; to him it was at best the less of two frightful evils.

So the dissentient "National" Members found in the personality of Lord Halifax some consolation during the brief period of five months and a half when they hoped their autumnal apprehensions would be belied by Hitler's conversion to good faith. Indeed Halifax knew the Christian value of comfortable words. Early in February 1939 he spoke in Hull. What he said was to many an agreeable contrast to the tone of some of Chamberlain's utterances. "I am naturally as much impressed as anybody can be by the need for unity at this time. I am as much alive as anybody can be to the divergences of opinion which stand in the way of full agreement to-day. I make no complaint at all of honest criticism based upon sound argument and genuine regard for the interest of this country. After all, the fact that criticism exists shows

that people realize how vital these things are." So spoke Lord Halifax, gentleman, and when, in mid-March, Hitler rounded off in Prague his victory at Munich, it was generally believed that he sustained a milder shock than the Prime Minister at the total eclipse of the sun.

For he had the right formula ready. Because of the political commotion it caused it is quite impossible to avoid referring to the speech he made five days after the German troops entered Prague. The setting was a House of Lords unwontedly filled with Peers who knew that, on this occasion at all events, they would be flattered by hearing something of importance. The Foreign Secretary defined the purposes of Munich and then endeavoured to meet the charge of having too guilelessly believed Hitler's assurances. The formula ran as follows: "No Member of His Majesty's Government has failed at any moment to be acutely conscious of the difference between beliefs and hope. It was surely legitimate and right to have hopes." So Halifax only believes in the things eternal. For his fellow-men he cannot cherish any more stalwart emotion than hope.

The House of Lords, for some reason, contained a far higher proportion of pro-Germans than the House of Commons. Upon the whole they are more interested in property, and to them the great menace to private ownership lies in the Communism of Moscow. This simple creed has been exploited with brilliant success by the racketeers in Berlin. They claim to be the great barrier to the march of anarchy and depredation. A dangerously high proportion of politically minded noblemen have lapped up this propaganda and

longed to cuddle up to the Nazi barrier against Bolshevism.

So some of their Lordships must have heard Halifax's strictures with deep searchings of their noble hearts. They saw the barrier being finally exposed as a monstrous sham, a fragile transparent sheet of glass. Halifax eulogized the habit of his fellow countrymen to want to shake hands after a scrap. Versailles contained mistakes, but German action had persisted in making progress to understanding more difficult. The latest behaviour of the Nazis had made economic collaboration impossible. It required all free peoples to think out their attitude anew. Which way should Britain now turn?

There were two possible courses to pursue in the search for security and the avoidance of war. There was the course laid down in the Covenant of the League. By it all willing states accept the obligation that an attack on one should be treated as an attack on all. The second course was followed by those who held that this Collective Security involved risks which greatly exceeded the safety it conferred; they thought that states should only bind themselves to intervene in conflicts where they were directly attacked. If the probability of direct attack seems low, then a larger number of people will incline to this second view.

But if, ran the argument of Lord Halifax, there is no apparent guarantee against a succession of attacks directed on all states which seem to stand in the way of the march to domination, "then at once the scale tips the other way." Self-defence might seem to dictate the acceptance of wider mutual obligations in the cause of mutual support.

This very weighty and elaborately argued inclination towards Collective Security, a thesis which I have telescoped into a few sentences, encouraged a number of people to jump on to the scales on the side to which Lord Halifax was clearly leaning. His speech had followed at a very short interval a douche from Simon deluging the notion of wider obligations with his own icy discouragement. Eden and Churchill put down a resolution asserting in terms support for Halifax's policy and urging a far greater effort of rearmament. About thirty more or less important names were added to the resolution. At once the Government circles bridled. This specific approval of Halifax and what he had said was rather irrationally held in some quarters to be an attempt to embarrass Chamberlain!

It was as though men did not know that a Foreign Secretary was supposed to speak the collective mind of the Cabinet. How could Halifax's speech have been made without Cabinet consultation of a particularly strenuous and unusually fruitful kind? Poland, Rumania, Greece and Turkey were speedily guaranteed and Conscription was introduced. The offending resolution, which did no more than accelerate or anticipate the Government's decision, was obligingly withdrawn.

How Lord Halifax enjoyed the effort of trying to link arms with Moscow, which must often have seemed to him to embody anti-Christ, baffles conjecture. In the light of his behaviour as Viceroy of India one is inclined to think that he approached the job without so much prejudice as a goodly proportion of his colleagues. But he might well prefer the enterprise

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of mollifying Goering and Hitler to bargaining with Maisky and Molotoff. However his most acid critics cannot call him a very stupid man, so, when the first policy became horribly impossible the second line might almost have seemed decent and desirable, lest the two enormous Powers should unite to the disaster of Western Europe. It is hardly to be imagined that Halifax could swallow the propagandist nonsense which alleged that the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics was militarily a thing of straw.

Such then is the God-fearing nobleman whom many are busily trying to groom for stardom. His record and his character are impressive, but his speaking is so unexciting and soporific that the public may look to him in vain for the heady stimulant of democratic eloquence. The proper specific might be supplied by some of the men who might be his first lieutenants, for Lord Halifax has incurred no personal enmities and could act as head of a Ministry of various and competing talents. Like Baldwin he would unite and not divide. "It is high time," say some, "that we again had a Prime Minister in the Lords, where he would be exempt from the rough and tumble of the Commons. What better sounding-board could be found for the careful utterances of the one man upon whose least word such awful issues depend?" Thus, no doubt, can the snub which may be in store for representative government be speciously embellished.

Not only has Halifax allowed his generally temperate habits to govern his tongue, but his public manners are as courteous as his private deportment is agreeable. His attitude on the front bench in the House of Lords indicates his whole outlook of unprejudiced inquiry,

Whether the speaker is supporter or critic he will peer intently over the top of his spectacles, keenly attentive to detect and appreciate anything valuable or constructive. The ankle of one long leg rests on the knee of the other, supporting the pad on which he is diligently noting points to blunt, to sharpen, or to dock. As he gazes at the noble orator his brow is furrowed in the anxious hope that the one who is now speaking will do himself full justice. Any temptation to smile or sneer has little chance of success. Lord Halifax is too well schooled to stoop to such caddish vulgarity. In the same mood and the same attitude when contemplating the personnel of less civilized governments than our own, he eagerly waits for some human monster to turn towards him any virtues he may possess. Thus disposed he is seen at his best—the earnest seeker after the good in other men's souls. To few of these human souls could his advance to the premiership cause deep distaste. But how many of them can see in the large and gentle being the kind of Prime Minister who might have to lead the nation through the final stages of the fiery test of war?

XV

"I WILL BE YOUR LEADER"

INSIDE and outside the Cabinet there are several more men, but no women, who must be considered as possible Prime Ministers of to-morrow. The stock of politicians in our limited democracy rises and falls so fast and so steeply that the man of whom at one moment his colleagues are murmuring with relief, "Thank God, John is there to take Neville's place," may next day be the object of their pity, their contempt, or their dislike. A missed opportunity, a speech ruined by carelessness or indolence, an unpopular policy—any one of these misfortunes will pull a man down, if not from office, at least from the esteem of his party.

When Malcolm MacDonald was brought into the National Government thousands of critics pointed the finger of scorn and growled, "Ah, nepotism!" And it would be hard to pretend that Malcolm was in any way handicapped through being his father's son. But the same people, if they could have seen and heard him, would have had to confess that he was conscientiously and competently responding to the smiles of fortune. For several of his declining years Ramsay MacDonald lived in a cloud disturbed but never dispelled by the thunder and lightning of his own speech. Malcolm was an unbelievable contrast. He was

unable by nature to say anything which fell short of perfect clarity. The very surprise he excited in others encouraged them to magnify his prospects.

Omne ignotum pro magnifico. To-day men are used to Malcolm and he no longer seems to them the heaven-sent leader of to-morrow. As Colonial Secretary he has been responsible for an attempt to resolve a grave difficulty before British statesmanship, the problem of Palestine. Jew and Arab have contended, while Berlin has exulted in our embarrassment. To some the Holy Land would seem to have been converted into an Augean Stables at the instigation of those who wish us ill. A political Hercules alone could cleanse them. Malcolm MacDonald's heroism is of a different stamp. He chooses to regard the problem as a Gordian Knot. He makes a preliminary pass with his steel and sees it bury itself in the national aspirations of Jewry. A bitter cry of pain is heard, but the Colonial Secretary has no right to look surprised. The world now likes him for himself, but few will enthusiastically palliate a policy which they cannot distinguish from defeat. To him politics may already seem a sour draught to be swallowed like medicine, and not to supply the normal need for nourishment, nor yet the heady pleasures of intoxication.

Other Scotsmen are doing their traditional duty of governing England. Until the hostility raised by the Milk Bill tripped him up, Mr. W. S. Morrison was widely regarded as the coming man. But now his eclipse seems total; for the future of his career it was a cruel thing that he had to pass into and through the Ministry of Agriculture. A rugged and robust eloquence harking back to his Scottish ancestry, intel-

lectual taste without elegances of manner, a rare philosophic grasp of Toryism, a striking physique, crowned with the wisdom of copious white hair, a faculty for debate just as useful as his skill as a performer at public meetings—these qualities seemed to have moulded a man whom no class or rank need have felt ashamed to follow. Fate has decided otherwise. She has hauled him out of the Ministry of Agriculture and bundled him into the shadows. Still he serves in the Cabinet—eager, no doubt, for a job that will be equal to his avid capacity.

And then from the same country comes another former Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Walter Elliot, whose brain works so fast and is so packed with endless varieties of knowledge that he has to put the heaviest curb on a precipitate spate of language. He makes debating a joyous tourney, a feat which is completely paradoxical when his strong and solemn features are seen in their sorrowful repose. Nor does his voice seem fashioned for humour and retort. Yet never is he nonplussed. For every criticism he has an answer which may be unconventional but is fully adequate. Behind the grim and resolute features and within the curious frame lurks a gentle spirit of fun. Somehow he too is beneath the clouds. It may be that the effort of matching his words with his appearance is too great for those who observe him. They expect strength; he gives them subtlety. They are ready for annihilation; he toys with their mistakes, re-fashions them according to his curious design, and thus presents them in their new and attractive shape to the admiration of the world.

Walter Elliot loves triumph and to be proved right.

He has had an ominous electoral record. He was first elected for Lanark in 1918 by a large majority, but by 1923 he had lost this seat. He then sat for the Kelvingrove Division of Glasgow but at the last election his margin was so slight that several re-counts were necessary. Next time he will need all his superhuman fighting resources to carry him to the top of the poll. No doubt the smell of battle will inspire him like a charger, but one dare not predict a victory for him. It almost seems as though he is doomed to perpetual descents from high places. He still has plenty of time before him, and if by the hundredth chance he became Prime Minister, one can foresee the steady slide downhill from the peak of triumph to the abyss of disillusion. Those who know him say he is a very human being, but whether the English public can ever become enamoured of his intensely Scottish soul is beyond all reasonable conjecture.

When yet another serious gentleman from North Britain, Sir John Anderson, was set over the business of Civil Defence a number of amateur prophets took up their fountain pens and wrote "Here is the man!" They could hardly have made a less sober prediction. He may be conscientious, well-schooled, deliberate, strong-minded, but the leader of the House of Commons needs to be more than a resolute civil servant. His career argues a big administrator. Between the ages of forty and fifty this careful Scotsman was permanent Under-Secretary of the Home Office, a position of great advisory responsibility. He was so thorough and so firm that they destroyed the permanence of his office and sent him to govern and to discipline Bengal till he was fifty-seven.

Now, nearly sixty, Anderson has to adjudicate on various devices to lessen our vulnerability from the air. Nine of his decisions out of ten will be correct, but not even this judicial excellence can build up the smiling personality without which a Prime Minister cannot hope to look the people in the face. He has had to be a rock which no vermin can nibble; a democracy prefers to cluster round an oak. The tree must have a stalwart stock, its branches should cast a generous and consoling shade. But while it successfully withstands the blasts of the hurricane its leaves must seem ready to respond to the breezes that play among them.

To-day there are three Scotsmen at the head of parties in the House of Commons. Sir Archibald Sinclair leads a score of Opposition Liberals; Mr. Maxton, at present, leads two members of the Independent Labour Party; and Mr. Gallacher, the solitary Communist, both leads and follows himself. This last is violent of tongue, but cannot complain of intolerance. Jimmy Maxton was once touched off in two adjectives by Mr. Winston Churchill, as "charming, but disordered." Charming he certainly is, but his logic is often well ordered enough to be beyond the powers of ordinary men to refute. He is that rare phenomenon in Britain—the born orator—who fills the Chamber of the House with his voice and personality. To-day he seems as jealous of the rights, the privileges and the procedure of the House of Commons as he is tortured by the sufferings of the working classes.

There remains Sir Archibald Sinclair, upon whom has devolved the responsibility of leading a tiny host with a great tradition. Like Maxton, the Socialist, he

is the soul of charm, and like a hundred Conservative members he is an Old Etonian. He is also Lord-Lieutenant of Caithness and an ex-Secretary of State for Scotland. He sits for Caithness and Sutherland—one of the few safe Liberal seats.

Sir Archibald owes his position to the defeat of Sir Herbert Samuel. But he has led the little army so well and can be so furiously and attractively eloquent that he has vexed the minds of some other party men with the apprehension lest he may greatly increase the Liberal representation in the next Parliament. I do not feel that this is a well-founded misgiving. The public must argue that, even supposing the Liberal Party were multiplied by three, they could only hope at most to hold the balance of power between two far greater parties. Twice since the war have the Liberals occupied that post of strategic but awkward responsibility, and twice has their occupation ended in disaster for themselves.

If, however, the three-party machine proved so fragile or so flexible that the oft-prayed-for "Left Centre Coalition" came into being, the fire of Sinclair's rhetoric might be seen and heard blazing around its head. But that is little more than a fancy. Leadership, however, has enlarged him. His smile, his boyish *bonhomie*, his strangely attractive stammer, have not been modified by the importance which attaches to his position. But when he speaks he is a different being. He commands that rotundity of expression which is said to have distinguished the speakers of the nineteenth century. So he seems often to be indulging in over-emphasis, as his instruments are limited to indignation, declamation and invective.

He is not yet fifty, so there may be time for him to vary his rodomontade with some moderation of tone. He must know that no landscape is all bright blue, and that no climate permits a perpetual thunderstorm.

It is time to turn to our English, but the first to be heard is one of the very few whom Scottish constituencies allow to represent them, the Liberal National Member for Leith, Mr. Ernest Brown. Now you may say that it is fantastic that this ex-sergeant-major former Liberal agent, with the lungs of brass, should be grouped among possible leaders. But Ernest Brown, without directly contradicting you, might soon imply that he found it impossible to agree. No man exults so openly in his success and his position. No one is more manifestly aware of the unlimited virtues of himself and his colleagues. Indeed he has plenty to be proud of. He has grasped the skirts of happy chance. With no thrusts from behind, he has worked himself to a place where he invites and receives a succession of pats on the back.

Unless there is some quite unforeseeable calamity in store for him Ernest Brown will, when he is next promoted, have to be adjudged the most successful Minister of Labour since the office was constituted. During his term the figures of men, women and children in insurable employment have reached record after record. Whatever the cause there are the facts, and Mr. Brown can be trusted to make the most of them. When he once inoffensively interrupted his fellow Baptist, Mr. Lloyd George, the former Prime Minister snapped out a contradiction and added, "And you would apologize, if you were

a gentleman!" Whether Mr. Brown allowed this unaccountable taunt to sting him is open to doubt. He would not worry; he is doing a man's job and is fully aware of it.

One more Englishman looms up. It is the massive figure of the Dominions Secretary, Sir Thomas Inskip. A little while ago he was commonly thought to be as near the succession as Hoare and Simon. That is said of him no longer. Fate or Neville Chamberlain does not rate him as high as did Stanley Baldwin. He is so upright in stature that he seems in danger of toppling backwards. But that may be his impeccable character asserting itself. His physique is as overpowering as his manner is stately. Relief is suddenly conveyed by a surprising impediment of speech and his hearers are reassured by learning that this rigid Low Churchman has at least one human frailty. Virtue rather than brilliance made him Solicitor-General as long ago as 1922. Later he was to become Attorney, but in neither office did he scintillate. One thing, however, he at last obliged the House of Commons to recognize; he could occasionally be most formidable in debate. Like a Roman tower he moved up to bring ruin upon the beleaguered city. His forensic experience was not wasted when he had to face the House.

Baldwin mistook his skill for vision and his character for drive. He amazed everyone by making him the first Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence. Inskip struggled with his new and impossible task. He had been able to stand up to Winston Churchill in the days of the Indian controversy. But now, having become "My Right Honourable and Most Unfortunate Friend," he found the task was no longer within his

powers. Eventually he was superseded by the sailor, Lord Chatfield. This interlude dimmed his chance of leadership. He has just reached the Woolsack, the zenith of professional ambition. It cannot now be known whether this magnificently upright mountain would have preferred to stay planted where he could still hope to lead the Conservative Party.

There may be some others of whom I ought to have written at less or greater length but they do not leap into view. If some dark horse suddenly makes the running I can only plead that in its uncertainty politics resembles the Derby. Of those I have enumerated who is most likely to lead the Nation? Of the Left you may inquire at Transport House, but I cannot promise you much enlightenment. As for the Conservatives you might, if you have the opportunity, consult the Chief Whip, the Right Honourable David Margesson. Heaven guide his choice. It matters.



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